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ENGLISH COMPOSITION AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

BY

STERLING ANDRUS LEONARD, A.M.

INSTRUCTOR IN ENGLISH, HORACE MANN SCHOOL

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

ENGLISH composition has been one of the least interesting subjects taught in the schools. The ordinary student has found the task of linguistic expression a dull exercise. Largely because he was provided with no initial enthusiasm for composing, speaking and writing in the classroom have been formal matters unrelated to his personal need to express or communicate his feelings and ideas. The pupil has been forced to observe the rules and niceties of the English language without ever being aware in any vital way of their uses to him. The result is that expression through language has been the most formal and artificial of all the school studies. In spite of years of training, our students fail to become easy, clear, and forceful writers. We are told that the Americans who can speak and write with effective fluency have learned the art outside of classrooms.

There is something inherently wrong in our methods of instructing youth in the art of literary expression. As measured by the canons of modern psychology, our traditional modes

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of teaching are flagrantly faulty. It seems the tritest of suggestions to say that a child should have some knowledge of the subject which he has been asked to discuss. Yet it can scarcely be said that we heeded this commonplace truth until a decade or two ago. It was customary to assign him topics for composition upon which he had no real information. If knowledge was supplied, it was in the form of "more words about words." The direct, personal, and vital experiences of boys and girls were a resource seldom utilized by the teacher of thirty years ago. Now, fortunately, we are asking our pupils to speak of the things they know in an intimate way, trusting that the ever-widening circle of interest will finally bring them to the ability to discuss topics which have a worth to adults.

3) But to have knowledge does not imply the desire or the power to communicate it. Wise men with minds filled with knowledge are not continuously revealing what they know. They are often silent in company because there is no need, no motive for bringing their intelligence to bear. To possess something to say is a fundamental condition of worthy expression, but it is by no means a final one. There must be a motive, a stimulation, which creates the desire or the need

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for speech. Defective motivation has been one of the greatest causes of poor instruction in composition. It is a fault persisting in practically all of our contemporaneous classroom work. The largest single problem with which the teacher has to deal to-day is that of getting adequate motivation into the composition period. Everywhere progressive teachers are experimenting in the hope of finding other means of making improved expression vital to elementary and high-school pupils.

One of the first conspicuous results has been an enrichment of the subject-matter dealt with. We have come to realize that the truth expressed by any one is seldom a purely intellectual matter. Ideas are colored by attitudes. It is this which gives them their vivacity, force, and charm. Yet not until recently have we aimed at the development of feelings, as well as ideas, as part of the content required for speech and writing. Our recent enrichment has developed the emotional side of self-expression, but in an accidental way. The effort was scarcely deliberate. The teacher realized that children were more readily enlisted in the recital of their personal experiences, which are always colored by personal attitude. But the explanation of this

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success, if given, was that the children were better informed. More intellectuality was sought by the teacher, but he was fortunate enough to find a vitalizing by-product in the subjective factors of personal experience.

Much of the failure of schools to develop any literary power beyond that of simple, direct exposition and narration is due to this neglect of feeling. If it were not for shades of feeling, what we know as literary style would not exist. Its fine variations of form are due not so much to differences of cold objective truth as to the subtle variations of attitude with which we confront reality. Poetic expression is different from the prosaic because of the dominance of the subjective factors in our desire to express ourselves. We shall never thoroughly enrich our composition-teaching until we accept the principle that the development of attitudes is as necessary as the development of an accurate comprehension of the varied world which we are to describe and discuss.

We must not make the mistake of assuming that training in composition is purely an individual matter. Most self-expression is for the purpose of social communication. We express ourselves in the presence of other people to gain

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appreciation or stimulation and to influence and control others. Our whole use of language has a social setting. This truth cannot be ignored in any effective accomplishment in the classroom. The futility of much of our past teaching has been due to our mental blindness to the social function of language. One has only to compare the situation of ordinary conversation with that of a class exercise in oral composition to realize how far we have forgotten the social genesis and purpose of speech. Worthy social conversation cannot be made at command of any person in authority. Ordinary human beings would not endure hearing the same item of discussion repeated by each person present. Nor would one care to say what every one else has already said. Yet these are some of the striking characteristics of a composition exercise. If we are to make our training real, we must naturalize it, which is to say that we must socialize our teaching of composition. Nothing is more important to the improvement of results than that we shall use the full psychology of linguistic intercourse in teaching people to talk and write.

The point of view of this book is novel. It will be radical in its reconstruction of teaching practice. Our need is to understand the full argu-

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ment for this new approach to the subject, and to understand what our gross educational experience and our special experimentation have to tell us about the new procedure. For guidance we offer the work of a thoughtful and progressive author, who knows through experience and thought the failures which must be avoided and the methods by which we shall achieve a result we have long striven for.

PREFACE

THIS study attempts a review of current practice in the teaching of English Composition in the light of present theories of education. Most of the modes of procedure discussed are, I believe, in fairly wide use in grades or in high schools to-day, although many of those objected to have doubtless been discarded by progressive teachers, and others noted have been only recently developed and are not generally known. Three points may be taken as the principal suggestions advanced: The first is the ideal of social teaching of composition; the English class is here presented as a group of good-spirited coöperators and critics working upon real projects. The second is the attempted handling of organization problems as we may suppose that children's minds will work best in mastering them. The third is the apparently fundamental distinction between matters essential for fixation in *unconscious* habit, on the one hand, and equally es-

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sential expressional powers, on the other, to be developed through *conscious* application of composition principles.

Of my indebtedness to other writers, obviously the greatest is to Professor John Dewey, who has stated with most helpful cogency the ideals of education as a social problem. The basic study of the Teaching of English is of course that by Professors Carpenter, Baker, and Scott. Other more exact acknowledgments I have tried to give in footnotes. Chief of my debts for constructive suggestions and for criticisms in revision are to my former colleagues, Miss Edith White, Mr. H. C. Henderson, and Dr. E. O. Finkenbinder, of the Milwaukee State Normal School, and to Mr. C. H. Ward, of the Taft School. Among other friends who have given help too pervasive for more specific acknowledgment are Miss Ida M. Windate, of the Western College for Women, and Professors Joseph Jastrow, Karl Young, and C. S. Pendleton, of the University of Wisconsin, all of whom have been so good as to read parts of the manuscript. Many of my students, particularly in extension

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classes, have been very real aids indeed. Above all I am indebted to Minnetta Sammis Leonard, who worked out the basic suggestion of types of child-activities as motive forces, and who has throughout given untiring encouragement and definite, essential help.

STERLING ANDRUS LEONARD

HORACE MANN SCHOOL

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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ENGLISH COMPOSITION AS A SOCIAL PROBLEM

I

THE SOURCES OF COMPOSITION PROJECTS IN CHILD-ACTIVITIES

* Nature provided for the communication of thought by planting with it in the receiving mind a fury to impart it.

EMERSON, *Education*.

THIS study is an attempt to discover principles by which effectiveness of speaking and writing may be best developed in grades and in high school. We have to begin with — if we lay hold of it right — children's eager desire to express what interests them. But ; though the small child insists on your listening to his flood of remarks, he does not really care enough about their effect to attempt forming any sort of judgment of it. The most absent-minded pretense of heed or assent usually quite suits him. (And unfortunately, many people go through life but little better socialized in this respect.) For developing and socializing this crude activity of children, we find most valuable forces, first, in their curiosity in exploring their surroundings, and

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second, in their equally keen interest in the live account of other people's experiences, which they get at second-hand through oral or written accounts. Both these sources may suggest innumerable projects for speech and writing. But, what is more important, a child's absorption in accounts of others' experience can be skillfully moulded into truly coöperative work among the children of a group with vigorous but good-spirited criticism of one another's results.¹

GOOD SUBJECTS MUST COME FROM VITAL, REALIZED EXPERIENCE

Where children say things without any idea of what they mean, — often for the mere taste of the words, as in repeating nonsense-rhymes, — we evidently do not have composition — the child's own presentation of his own ideas. Yet, because we have not always realized that true and living experience is the best source of expressible ideas, we have too often in school classes got nothing better than acceptable repetition of phrases. We know well enough in theory that only realized or "concrete" ideas — "effective"

¹ The relation between the idea of social education and the teaching of composition is best presented in Dr. Dewey's *The School and Society*, (1st ed.) pp. 65 ff.

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as opposed to "formal" knowledge, as Mr. Campaignac puts it ¹ — can generate valuable and individual expression. We may well note also, what investigations have specially emphasized, ² that the major interests for a child are happenings full either of action or of interest in "persons" — first, in the child himself and next, in the animals and humans about him. But we have too often failed to view this matter altogether *from the point of view of the child himself*; we have determined what ideas he should have and have assigned him those; and so our composition materials have again and again been hopelessly abstract and futile.

For example, many a grade class in making a trip to the fire house have taken down religiously all that the chief told them of the number of men in the department, the amount of their salaries deducted for pensions, and the like, and have copied it cheerfully into themes — to the neglect, in the space they could give to the subject, of what they had themselves observed and

¹ *The Teaching of Composition*, p. 10; cf. also Dewey's *How We Think*, pp. 135 ff., and Dr. Bachman's articles in the *Elementary School Journal*, May-June, 1915 (vol. xv, pp. 491 and 529).

² Barnes's *Studies in Education*, vol. I, pp. 15 and 203; *Child-Study Monthly*, vol. II, pp. 152-67; etc.

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realized and could express in their own way: how the men get dressed and down the poles, how the horses are petted and how they respond to an alarm, or how to ring in an alarm from the corner box. Their usual restatement of quite lifeless facts is in no real sense composition work.

It is clear that a child need not actually have set his eyes and fingers on a thing to realize it; it may be born alive of his own vigorous fancy, or he may have imagined it in following some one else's vivid account. Children do gain this enlargement of experience very early; in the first grade, they often study primitive life, and really feel themselves a part of it with their attempts to build hut and sledge and find sources of food-supply.¹ So far as their study of history and geography is thus real, it may provide excellent subject-matter and vigorous incentive to expression. But wherever school subjects present flat, indigestible facts, to be merely gathered and stored in memory, whatever the practical values of these as information or as materials for organization study, it appears certain that we ought to keep altogether clear of them as subjects for compositions.

¹ For example, Teachers College Elementary School Course, Grades 1 and 2.

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GOOD SUBJECTS MUST LEAD NATURALLY TO EXPRESSION IN WORDS

It is to be noted, further, that many ideas which a child quite thoroughly realizes and is deeply interested in may nevertheless arouse no impulse toward *verbal expression*. Thus, nothing should be called for in speech or in writing which naturally demands no expression, or which can be better expressed in some other way. In the early grades, certainly, subjects without action — descriptions of things, places, people not doing something — can be best handled in drawing or modeling, or else let alone; at least below the high school, subjects expressible in time order are probably always preferable. Again, we may well hold to the sound idea, formulated by Mr. Chubb,¹ that children should talk and “write about things seen, rather than felt.” There are unquestionably many deep impressions, from pictures such as the *Sistine Madonna* or the *Song of the Lark*, for instance, or from stories with an ideal not baldly stated but illustrated well, which we had better not analyze and force to expression. That children by preference express objective mat-

¹ *Teaching of English*, p. 184.

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ters when unhampered with requirements is suggested by such studies as that of Miss Vostrowsky.¹

A. FOUR TYPES OF CHILD-ACTIVITY AS SOURCES OF SUBJECT-MATTER

Good subjects, then, we may define as such vital realized experiences of the child's own as naturally call for verbal expression — not for drawing or pantomiming or simply for quiet, undisturbed growth. And such subjects are numberless in any child's life day by day. If we examine briefly the commonest types of child-interest and activity, we may discover what children most naturally talk or write about in school or outside it. A suggestive grouping about centers of typical interest is worked out in the University School at Columbia, Missouri;² these are (1) hearing or reading stories; (2) plays and games; (3) construction or handwork; and (4) careful observation of human and other activities or their realization from other people's accounts. Each of these interests provides a great deal of material for expression.

¹ "Children's Stories," Barnes, *Studies in Education*, vol. I, p. 15.

² Dewey, *Schools of To-morrow*, chap. III.

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Most obviously, his acquaintance with stories may suggest to the child the great funds of imaginative material at his own command. Thus is developed his fanciful elf-nature. And stories are not handled to the best end if they do not also help make him see the common things all about him as more truly interesting than before — full of mysteries, and of people just as worth while, once you know them, as prince or starveling of fairy books. Through his stories the child thus becomes a citizen of two worlds, the very real one of tales and the freshly mystic and strange one just around him. These story influences exhibit themselves in his play at dolls or pirates — indeed, throughout his reactions toward people and events; and they are sources of many subjects and of motives to expression.

The second and the third typical interests to be noted are children's zeal in games and in handwork and construction of many sorts. Incidents from play and the like fascinating activities appear to be the subject of subjects for children's talk. The methods of both games and handwork also interest children in proportion as they attempt more organized projects, and are the source of endless comment and discussion. If the school but gives occasion for these

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vivid and living interests to express themselves, we may here gain a starting-ground of free and vigorous expression upon which to develop composition power.

The fourth type of child-activity to be considered begins with observing the activities of home and community and such nature processes as the ways of birds and insects. We may first encourage children to watch carefully the laying of asphalt pavements or the digging of cellars and to discuss and come to understand it in class. Group and individual expeditions for these purposes are likewise valuable, provided only the child does not simply repeat what he is told by workmen and others, but succeeds in relating in his own way what he has understood.

THE PROBLEM OF DIGESTING NEW EXPERIENCES AT SECOND-HAND

There soon appears the problem of helping children handle matters which they cannot themselves observe, but which they must come to know about if we would get them beyond the circle of their small immediate horizon. How are we to help them realize and express in their own way — not by unmeaningly parroting some one else — such things as they can learn about

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only through hearing or reading of them? To insure that the child manages the necessary digestion of such experiences, we may need to help him gain three desirable ends: (1) concrete basing of his subject-matter upon what he already fully realizes; (2) the fullest accuracy in crediting new ideas to their sources; and (3) adaptation of his expression to his actual audience, thus securing its reality to them. These are obviously requirements for handling new materials of direct sense-perception also; but they are the most fully essential, and at the same time are more difficult to secure, when the subject is learned about indirectly.

(1) *Through fusion of new with old ideas*

This point is merely the usual necessary counsel that the child be helped always to realize new experiences by fusing them with the old. First of all it is apparently well to use as school-composition subjects, in far greater proportion than we usually have done, what the child can set his own eyes and fingers upon and learn all about unaided by any one else's explanation; this should form the sound base for all later excursions. And then, as early as possible, we may well insist that the sources from which a child

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draws all his composition material — particularly where one of these sources is another person's account — shall be in all cases *more than one*. We all realize that a child's recitation from his book of information about river deltas is many times as vivid if he builds it about an account of applying that information in looking for deltas in streams or making them in gutterways near by. But we may gain almost the same end by studying several accounts of any matter, adding probably the help of pictures, and making the recitation or theme a composite report of these sources. The more this simple principle of comprehending new ideas by linking and fusing them invariably with old ones is applied to composition subject-matter, the better we shall probably get on; it appears to be the first principle of success, particularly in compositions based on what one reads or hears about merely.

The purpose of this counsel is simply that a child's expression may be helped to remain always his own — the story his story, an outgrowth of his individual experience, which cannot be like that of any one else. We may test the value of any composition by the query: Does the child express his idea in a way to show

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the action of his own sense and mind upon it? This is sometimes difficult to determine, to be sure, since children naturally use the wording of their source of information; and this is right and useful, provided only their account is not mere lifeless copy from talk or book. Yet we can know well enough, provided we really know the child himself. Does he speak with natural vivacity of face and gesture? Is the healthy crudity of his blunt and inexact child-mind — his raw expression, and the staled phrasings he has borrowed here or there — often incongruously mixed with the finer and more precise wording he has just adopted? If so, the chance is that he has recast and fused what he has newly learned with previous experience, and so made it quite his own. A boy writing a story of Braddock's conference with Washington expressed thus the general's contempt of the colonial tactics: "‘Not on your life; gentlemen don't fight like that,' cried General Braddock." The boy had the idea clearly in mind, and that is the prime requisite. At the same time, then, that we plan to help him sharpen his tools for finer or more exact statement, we may well be glad of this very rawness and crudity of his expression; for he has made a gain impossible to the

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child who merely reflects the information he gets, with painful accuracy, from a bright, hard surface of mind.

(2) *Through proper crediting of sources*

In aid of this principle, wherever the children's accounts are in any part built on some one else's observation — whether in stories from local history, or industrial processes, or experiences from a wider environment — it is essential always, both in oral and written themes, that they credit as accurately as they can the source of their statements. A child may say, for example, "This is what old Mr. Jones told me about when there were Indians all around here"; or, "I found this in So-and-so's Geography on page 10." By thus making quite unmistakable the sources of facts or opinions he cites, a child can make possible for himself and for his readers the fair rating of new ideas. And it is only as they learn early to tell in this simple way where they get what they have not directly perceived, beginning with their simple story reproductions and recitations about other new experiences, that children can establish the basis for habits of accuracy and honesty in thinking.

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The need of testing statements

Children may also come, by this route of examining and noting who said this or that, to understand and develop the scientific doubt which is essential to real training in thought. They will be spurred by other pupils' challenge to examine more carefully the bases of fact statements they have heard or read; and particularly they will, by countless such jolts, be assured both of the difference between observed facts and mere opinions and of the meager value of all opinions which are not backed with so much specific statement of concrete instances as makes conclusion from it safe. When a child insists that killing spiders brings rain and is scoffed at by his companions, we may help him to discover, through his effort to back his opinion, that much more than the authority and the chance instances he has been accepting must be secured as foundation for any solid belief. Thus, through investigating and experimenting, he may catch the first glimmer of a scientific habit of mind.

(3) Through adaptation of expression to one's audience

As a third point in helping children to digestion of new experience, we must lead the class

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to demand always that each child adapt what he presents specifically to their understanding. Indeed, growth in the art of writing or speaking may be defined simply as a process of becoming increasingly "reader-minded" — able, that is, to test one's own expression for its actual clearness and force to those he intends it for. The child must make his account real to the class by basing it altogether in *their* knowledge and experience. Thus he may not be permitted new technical terms which a bricklayer, for instance, has told him — *hod* or *mortar* and the like — without making clear to his audience just what these things are. In most composition work I have seen, not nearly enough is made of this, the crux and central principle of a social teaching of composition.

In view of the wide range of composition subject-matter that, we have noted, may be generated by children's interest in stories, play, hand-work, and observation, there seems to be no justification for assigning as *composition subjects* — whatever their importance in other school work — sterile, dry matter that does not represent to the children realized and vital experience. We have noted that realization

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is the fundamental test for both selection and presentation of material; we must in all ways help children, especially in handling ideas they get at second-hand, to the use and fusion of several sources of information, proper crediting of sources, and most of all, true adaptation of what they present to their audience, so that it becomes actual reality to them also. Thus we can hope to develop in children, first, power of distinguishing, in what they hear and read, between statements of fact and statements of opinion; and second, some true sense of their respective values.

B. VITAL MOTIVES AND PROJECTS FOR COMPOSITION

We are next concerned with the definite motives and the specific composition projects which may be developed out of these natural activities of children. There appears to be no need of guiding them toward a formal differentiation of their motives in attempting various problems. But usually, in fact, they respond to incentives which we may for our own convenience classify as of three types — projects more or less vaguely defined which they think it worth while to carry out. We may call these the

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“story-teller” motive, the “teacher” motive, and the “community worker” motive — this last an interest in good-spirited coöperation upon projects suggested by school or other social needs.

I. THE STORY-TELLER OR ENTERTAINER MOTIVE

The story-teller motive (by this I of course mean the desire to tell stories, as distinguished from the interest in hearing them) apparently grows from the child's desire to rehearse his own exploits and real or fanciful adventures. It is pleasant for him to go over, simply for his own benefit, the most trivial happening.¹ But besides this, a child finds that his effective telling of a story gives him standing in his small community, whether he celebrates and sings himself or tells of other events. The attention of the group when he succeeds in making a picture live and move before them, their desire, perhaps stimulated by the teacher's suggestions, for more of specific detail — these may lead him to a new and genuine pleasure in holding the attention of others and gaining their commendation. This impulse — not for a long time very

¹ Campagnac, *The Teaching of Composition*, p. 20.

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altruistic, to be sure — has tremendous potentiality in the composition class. Their demand that the speaker make his picture and other sense-appeals clear and real experiences, once this is developed under skillful direction, stirs up an eager desire to transfer his experiences and his fancies into just as real ideas for his classmates.

Story types: Real and fanciful adventures

Simple chronicles of what the child has actually seen or done and tales modified or created by his fancy appear to be about equally good stimuli to expression; but they appeal to different children, or rather to different interests in any one child. Provided the stories are made real to their audience, they are successful — though on ethical grounds it may be better to see that the child learns to label rightly his fanciful tales. The first-hand experience subjects may include accounts of home pleasures — romps and story-hours and family expeditions — of vacation and holiday adventures, and of good times of the class group. The subjects will be wisely limited by the teacher's suggestion and influence to what is wholesome; gore and domestic scandal and stories priggish

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in their account of naughty children or of very good ones are perhaps about equally mischievous.

The chance to tell stories built with the aid of fancy fascinates most normal children; yet a teacher's blunt demand for an imaginative story may quench this interest for a long time if not for good. The imaginary play of children — Indians, house, or school — and excursions which they take with the heroes of their stories probably furnish the chief bulk of subjects. The outline of a story to be filled in with specific detail as the children imagine it — the story of Faithful Fido, for instance — is one good opening. Another comes from starting a lively story, like that of Merlin's Cave,¹ and letting the children finish it to suit themselves. Such a beginning as, "‘Well, Fred, what makes you so late?’ asked his mother sharply," or, "‘Now you get right out of my kitchen!’ cried Aunt Dinah," rarely fails in stimulating most original and happy response. The meeting of a well-known story character in a new place or condition, and the party Mother Goose gave for her children, or Simple Simon and Jack Horner at a fair, are stirring topics. Pictures prove to

¹ In *Merry Tales*, by Skinner.

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be good in proportion as they effectively suggest a real story-situation. There appears to be little or no value in inducing children to describe the picture, but the class discussion may help them to look in it for hints of interesting happenings for their stories. Later, topics of this sort may be used with great effect in the effort to make history and geography lessons dramatically real. The meeting of Benjamin Franklin and Mr. Edison on the Styx House-Boat, or of fur-traders and Indians, and the dramatization of scenes in other lands are good examples, provided always the children, usually helped by discussion, have first conceived the affair as a true experience.

This is, indeed, the crux of the whole matter, particularly in subjects of the children's imagining. If these stories are to be more than a confused jumble and unreal stringing of detail, it is evident that they must tie as close to real experience as any other subjects given. This real experience may be that of other stories; but the most successful assignments of this sort appear to be those that introduce a mystic or fairy element into the child's actual surroundings — "If I had Aladdin's lamp, or the *Tarnkappe*," for instance. As with children's com-

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position subjects in general, we may safely assume that these topics are good in proportion as they suggest imagination of concrete matters, and as they are kept pretty clear of attempts to discuss emotions.

Class discussion to orient projects

The success of these projects probably depends just as much on the way in which they are presented as on the subject-matter itself; the children must have a real basis for understanding them, and especially they must be in the right spirit for setting out.¹ The most effective aid in this appears to be the free discussion of the subject in class, where many children may suggest what they will have happen to start the story and perhaps to finish it, and thus give useful hints of new departures to those who are slower in getting a start. Given the right direction by the readiest children, this work need have no limit save the possible powers of each child enhanced by the inspiration of his fellows.

¹ Cf. Elizabeth Hodgson, "Orientation in English Composition," *English Journal*, April, 1914 (vol. III, p. 233).

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*The values of these projects: fun, fancy, and
observation*

The sort of stories whose basis is actual happenings may, under the urge of social demand, stimulate the children to note in some detail interesting sights and sounds and odors in picnics and walks to and from school, and so on, to see more color and form and movement, and to gather the most possible of characteristic human detail, as of how people act in disagreeable situations like missing a car. This human interest has particularly large values later in showing how we actually judge people's character and motive; in particular, it may lead children to avoid meaningless conventional assumptions based on face or dress merely and establish the value of careful observation of what people do and say. The impulse to a child's happy fancy from specific interesting suggestions about imagining people and situations, and the direction to socially useful ends of the ideas thus aroused, may have just as real importance. And whether or not these two interests are ever developed into highly artistic powers, they may, at any rate, cultivate fine "habits of harmless enjoyment," and such de-

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lectable social ends as real appreciation and ability in telling simple everyday incidents and in writing individual letters.

2. THE TEACHER MOTIVE

The child's interest in telling about what he can do or make or what he has seen some one else doing is at first no different from the story motive. His account of how he made a kite is at first but another case of his own achievements passed in review. But give him as audience somebody who really wants to know about the process, and we may transform his conception entirely. He must now serve a practical purpose; a new element has entered into his calculations. In the case of handwork, the child who is an authority on a subject — making a cake or playing volley ball — may teach the class to do it. A practicable test of success here is having the other children actually do the thing. For instance, one sixth-grade boy explained the process of making a kite — in a vigorous, straightforward way, but without helpful and definite detail. The teacher said, "Harry, will you please repeat a little more slowly the part about putting the sticks together and fastening them; and, Ellen, suppose you try holding these three

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rulers just as Harry tells you." At first Harry was a little contemptuous of Ellen's failure at this; but the other boys saw the point and were eager to clear up the confusion. The teacher rightly gave Harry the chance to make his own adjustment, and he succeeded in doing it. It is through such experiment and betterment, with the help of real and practical criticism, that the second significant interest in expression comes in. We may call it the teacher motive.

Types of explanation-projects

This type may lead to quite as many important subjects as the story-teller motive. It draws its material not alone from the children's interest in games and handwork, but also from the whole range of subjects which they learn about both through direct observation and through experience at second-hand, from book or lecture or picture.¹ For examples we may note many practical assignments like letting children give directions for games and exercises which the class are to go through. From their very requirement of practicability, these are more difficult to do well than stories, but I have known of their excellent development even in kinder-

¹ See p. 8.

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garten. It is necessary to start with simple ones — playing keep-away with bean bags, telling riddles or puzzles, or directing dramatizations like that of *The Wind and the Sun*. These proceed to devising games for number work and language drills and planning special exercises for occasions like Halloween — all of them projects requiring very clear explanation. In high school the children may come to explanation of complex and difficult games like baseball for those who want to understand it and don't. The type should include also investigation and report on all sorts of things that the children care to know about; the wash-wringer or the ice-cream freezer at home becomes deeply interesting to most children if the mystery of its working is well suggested to them. And these simple mechanical principles, thus worked out and explained by the children to whom they appeal, will form a basis for such later investigations of the working of industries as have been suggested.

The teacher type of theme subjects includes other matters of explanation, such as clarifying the meaning of difficult sentences in textbooks and other reading, explaining old proverbs and maxims by illustration from the children's own

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experience, and the like.¹ Where they can do their own interpreting and perform the functions of critic and teacher for one another, a healthy stimulation of the spirit of research is induced that should carry young people deep enough into any difficulty.

Values of the explanation-projects

The purpose of this whole type of subjects and problems we have grouped under the teacher motive is to give one's audience useful ideas; these must, therefore, be made utterly clear before everything else. Through this requirement enters the necessity for more definite and perfectly exact details, as in the case of the boy who explained making a kite; and as we shall see later,² these have somewhat different requirements as to beginnings, organization, and the like. Just so far as the child has done or observed interesting things that he thinks he can make practically clear to his classmates, these themes have a very solid hold on his interest.

3. THE "COMMUNITY-WORKER" MOTIVE

But this type of motive, good as it is, is hardly so socially valuable as the sort of projects, read-

¹ Cf. pp. 13 and 28.

² Chap. III.

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ily initiated in a social class, which demand the common action of the group for carrying them out. These require of the child the utmost in effective expression to make clear the details of a plan which he has worked on because he considers it important to the group and which he presents to them for judgment. His project, to be successful, must command the sympathetic understanding of his "age-fellows" and enlist coöperation. The sort of subjects with this key-motive we may call the "community-worker" topics. They grow out of the observation, discussions, and activities that center around *group* or *neighborhood needs*.

Types of projects in meeting social needs

The community worker finds plenty of composition projects to keep him busy in aiding the smooth running of his school and wider neighborhood. He may usually begin in the most immediate environment with noting how to make the schoolroom and yard attractive places to work and play in. Many teachers arrange to let the children write necessary letters, — requests, orders, and so on, — and see to the school or branch public library, checking up books and getting and returning them. This

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may call, too, for reports and plans; the pupil librarians may tell about the sort of books most read and make recommendations, or gather opinions from children and from outsiders and discuss them.

This may extend almost automatically — as in the Indianapolis and Chicago schools, for example,¹ to examination of the neighborhood and formation of projects for vacant-lot gardening, cleaning up alleys, and innumerable other improvements. One grade class worked out quite a complete investigation of the expenses and dangers of scattering paper, refuse, and glass about the parks after picnics. And there are other manifestations of good social spirit, such as the Boy Scouts demand, which can well be taken account of in composition classes and illustrated by stories and incidents. All these subjects arise spontaneously enough, in a socialized classroom, from the ideas which flood upon the child. Thus he learns to be observing and to form his own conclusions about needs and injustices, because he discovers that his teacher and his classmates listen eagerly to what he finds absorbingly important to talk about.

¹ "Schools of To-morrow," pp. 93 *ff.* and 97; Bulletin of U.S. Bureau of Education, No. 642.

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Values of community-worker projects

All this should be of the greatest value. To get the coöperation of his class group and of other people in solving the problems he attempts, a child must explain very clearly the facts he has noted which have led him to desire something done, and he must present them so vividly as to win assent and action. He must also be able to work with others and value their contributions. The projects of the community worker thus use the thinking of the children and their powers of expression to meet actual social problems. In connection with the study of local and wider civics later, this furnishes material for the most lively sort of discussion and debate and for the formation of ideals.

THE PRESENTATION OF OPINIONS

One further point seems worth noticing here; we might, indeed, differentiate a fourth type of motive to expression if it did not overlap and include much of the last two we have been considering. A great deal of what the child has to explain or discuss from his interests both as teacher and as community worker is not statement of observed facts, but presentation of his

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original opinions or of opinions he has seen reason to adopt. All that we as teachers need do here is to help him and his friends toward seeing just where opinions enter. They need to know that these are not facts, but their individual conclusions, and that the *why* — the fact details they have observed — is the interesting and important matter in these regions. A child's presentation of opinions is often merely explanation of his position — making it quite clear. Whenever, in interpreting a sentence that has caused difficulty, or in giving his reasons for liking a favorite game, he meets with differences of opinion, explanation automatically becomes argument. However, the sole new factor thus introduced is a desirable sharpening of motive for hunting out more fully concrete detail; in procedure there appears to be no essential difference so far as the child may be expected to see. It is rather the distinction between such facts as he can observe or collect on good authority, on the one hand, and his own or anybody else's opinions on the other, that appears to be alone fundamental here.¹

Many good projects in elucidation of opinions

¹ Cf. "As to the Forms of Discourse," *English Journal*, April, 1914 (vol. III, p. 201).

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suggest themselves: There are explanations of familiar proverbs, like "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched," with every-day examples from the child's own experience. Others may arise from candid examination of popular superstitions.¹ Again, the child may defend his explanation of a sentence by citing other happenings in the story — various revelations of Lady Macbeth's or Puss-in-Boots's characters, for instance — or his favorite game by a glowing account of its values and joys. One amusing little girl supported her preference for the Fourth of July instead of Thanksgiving by describing the prettier dresses one could wear then. Her male opponent was annoyed and derisive, but the majority, including even some of the boys, voted for the joys she had vividly portrayed, and the teacher pointed out to her opponent that he could have won his case only by a still more alluring account of the pleasures of turkey and pie. Formal and thorough study of what constitutes effective argument must come in more adult courses designed to teach these things, but children can certainly gain very practical hints on the subject in the sturdy give-and-take of a fairly umpired social classroom. It is to be hoped that

¹ See p. 13.

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each one will be encouraged to hold his opinions staunchly against whatever adverse wind till he is given a solid reason for change, and to change frankly when he sees good cause for doing so. It seems particularly necessary that teachers lead always toward discovery of the constant presence of opinions in all that the children hear and read, and to suggest the ways in which these can best be valued and presented.

PROJECTS THAT REACH BEYOND THE CLASS GROUP

There remains for discussion one final branch of this wide subject of composition motives and projects. Topics of any sort which all the group have examined and discussed or which they all know about do not need or suggest further organized expression before the group. To expect this or insist upon it, as many teachers are tempted to do, cannot but be unnatural and deadly. But such subjects may promote other excellent projects. Wherever possible, there should be discovered occasions for presenting these matters to other audiences. The class projects may be widely varied by themes in which the children really imagine themselves a body of village councilors, or a band of cru-

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saders, or anybody whatever, and adapt their stories or explanations to these people. Or they may actually speak or write to other classes, or to their own parents, or to any one who may be got to care about their experiences and projects, and try to gain interest or assent. Sometimes upper classes write fairy stories and the like and send or read them to children in a lower grade. An informal assembly period in which each grade or class present their experiences in investigation or study is excellent. So is a systematic interchange between schools in different localities — a help particularly in realization of geography or history. I know of one high-school class who prepared a series of exhibits, pictures, and diagrams on paper-making, a local industry, and a set of themes each presenting a definite phase of the subject, and sent these to a Southern school from which had come a request for the information. If the suggestion had accompanied these that the Southerners prepare and send a similar account of the cotton industry, there would have resulted such a complete social interchange as I suggest.

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MOTIVES FOR WRITTEN COMPOSITION

- (a) *Preservation of specially good work*
- (b) *Publication — reaching a wider audience*

Written composition, like the oral work, should grow naturally from the conversations and discussions of the children. Writing may often suggest itself because there is not class time for all the children to talk; the proposal may then find favor that each one write his story. We find that a frequent motive is the desire to preserve an idea that pleases the child because he has thought it through and found it interesting and worth while. More socially valuable in its results is the desire, already suggested, to reach a wider audience than the class — the child's parents, or a sick class-mate, or children somewhere else. One phase of this is the interest in publication. The school paper is a useful outlet for this social impulse, and letter-writing is probably its most universal and valuable expression.¹

¹ Many high-school teachers have found unusual value in starting groups of children into experiments in amateur journalism. Information as to national associations of amateur journalists can be had of Mr. M. W. Moe, Appleton High School, Appleton, Wisconsin.

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Upon the basis of natural child interests and activities as sources of composition subjects, we have in this chapter seen some of the motives which urge children to self-expression: those of the story-teller or entertainer, of the teacher, and of the community worker. The second and the third type frequently include interest in explaining or defending opinions by showing the facts — actually observable matters — on which they are built. All of them may lead to the delightful possibilities of talking and writing for other audiences than the social class group, and thus are found still more new and fascinating motives. The possibilities of this sort, both real and imaginary, are so numerous that there should be little reason for working overmuch in one type, with resultant narrowed interests and limited expressional development. And there seems even less excuse for themes brutally demanded, or for ill-tasting assignments covered with a transparent syrup of assumed motive.

II

THE SOCIAL GROUP AS AN AGENT IN EXPRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

You send your child to the schoolmaster, but 't is the school-boys who educate him.

EMERSON, *Culture in Education*.

So soon as a child has an experience or a problem that absorbs his attention, we all have noted how eagerly he proceeds to crude, enthusiastic attempts at expression. And in the interests that thus arise we have discovered many motives which, in their possibilities at least, are truly social. But, even given these impelling interests, his powers of expression are as yet quite unsocialized. His observation, though quick, is inaccurate and wavering, and his power of organizing and stating his ideas naturally trails considerably behind that. Moreover, he has, as we have noticed, little if any judgment of the effects he actually secures and no idea of how he can gain better ones. We come, then, to the central problem of this study: How, stirred by such interesting problems requiring expression, can the school class be knit into a social group

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organized for mutual help, and aided to move steadily forward in the arduous way of attaining effective expression?

THE MOTIVE FORCE TOWARD COÖPERATIVE WORK

It has already been suggested ¹ that we shall attempt to use for this purpose a third motive force, in addition to the interests already discussed, first, in expression itself, and second, in varied exploration and adventure. This force is the children's interest in other people's accounts of worth-while experience. The present chapter presents a discussion of how we may transform children's naïve pleasure in what is told them into a truly valuable creative and coöperative interest in making one another's stories the best possible. We shall then be able to seek the most practicable method by which the social response of such a class group, as coöperators and audience, may be brought to bear in helping children carry out their projects to the best advantage and develop true composition power.

¹ Chap. I, p. 2.

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TWO STAGES IN EVOLVING A SOCIAL CLASS GROUP

(1) *Free and Unstudied Talk*

(2) *Prepared Compositions*

In considering this development there have appeared to be two convenient stages:¹ The first is unstudied and free *conversation*, whose ideal is simply encouraging freedom of expression and interchange of experience. This is not generally composition, but it is an essential preliminary. The second is prepared *compositions*, whether oral or written, made ready for a definite, but in most cases quite informal, purpose, and to be judged by the class as a coöperative group of keen but good-spirited critics. Because confusion of these two stages has sometimes had the double bad effect of formalizing and constraining the unstudied group conversation and, on the other hand, of permitting slipshod effort to pass where only prepared and careful work should, it seems worth while to differentiate the two as sharply as possible.

¹ This division is suggested by Miss Mary B. Fontaine, Supervisor of English, in her *Course of Study in English for the Charleston, W. Va., Public Schools*, 1916 (p. 4).

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The spirit and values of free discussion

First, then, as to informal talk in the classroom. The initial work in any class, whether in grades or high school, should probably in all cases be free discussion of real human interests — small happenings on circus day and the like. This is pleasantly started in kindergartens in the “morning circle” talk. Its success must, of course, depend almost wholly on the power of suggestion and the fine spirit of the teacher.

As a recent writer says of the kindergartner, such a teacher must “resemble the tactful hostess guiding the conversation into desirable channels. She must ignore the unimportant and undesirable contributions and select for emphasis such remarks as will best serve the group. She must value each contribution for its individual effort. . . . Thus is developed courteous attention and ability to share experience.”¹ Campagnac discusses inimitably the idea of such conversation, where children are permitted, not required, to talk, and where the teacher, if he holds off properly and otherwise

¹ Minnetta Sammis, “The Kindergarten as a Socializing Agency,” *Western Journal of Education*, April, 1912.

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shows himself socially desirable, may be appealed to and asked to talk also.¹

This quite unstudied conversation has such great value that it should, I believe, have its place much further on in the school grades than it generally does. It is like the sort of recitation which Dewey calls "a social clearing-house." It helps to discover many new interests, and gives the teacher a definite idea not otherwise obtainable of the children's individualities and environment. Perhaps most valuable of all, it helps to bring a social spirit into the class — a freedom and spontaneity without which composition work as we are here considering it cannot possibly be carried on.

Its direction and criticism

For furthering natural talk among the children, the teacher may be aided by some readjustment of the classroom organization. We readily see why small groups can better join in friendly talk than can large classes. Again, where the pupils sit so that each sees everybody else and the speaker does not have the horrid necessity of addressing backs of heads, good conversation is much more natural and possible.

¹ *The Teaching of Composition*, pp. 31-33.

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Our present classrooms are designed chiefly for securing a maximum of order and dispatch. Parliamentary practice is demanded in the custom of addressing the teacher always, and is parodied in the waving of right hands for recognition. Such a formal arrangement is better fitted to the recitation of assigned topics or to the giving of prepared themes; it is doubtful whether such seating and method can be made to secure the most possible of the union and cordiality of spirit particularly essential to this conversation type of language study. Wherever possible, then, the seating should be rearranged when we wish to have conversation — best with a small number of children at a time grouped, perhaps, in a circle or semicircle. Where this is impossible, they had all better squirm into position for seeing one another when they talk, and each should thus so far as possible feel that he is addressing his mates rather than talking for or to the teacher.

In the primary grades, particularly, such free discussion may well comprise a major part of the composition work proper.¹ But unlimited

¹ Story reproduction, presentation of plays written by some one else, and exact recitation of matter from texts, we all, of course, recognize as necessary; but as these do not appear to be

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and rather formless talk is, of course, only a beginning of the way. From the start, we may work toward holding ever more closely to a definite subject of conversation, selected frequently by the children, and trying to bring out as many interests as possible in connection with this. The teacher may well have increasingly definite purposes and guide the conversation skillfully in ways he regards as desirable. Thus, in our free play of conversation we begin at once to introduce some simple principles of organized and effective speech, especially that of an unfettering limitation and holding to a subject.²

The question of corrections in conversation

We must consider here a further point — the advisability of corrections at this stage of the work. We find the speech habits of children many times fearful and painful. And there may perhaps be place, even in our free conversation,

composition in the sense of this study, — the child's own organization and expression of his individual experience, — it has seemed well to discuss these separately with other topics — word-study and sentence-structure and the necessary drills — that are parallel and contributory to composition work proper. (Cf. chap. iv.)

² Cf. chap. III, pp. 68, ff.

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for correction of a very few of the worst mistakes in the kindly, incidental fashion of the kindergartner — “We say it this way.” Best of all, the teacher who wants to prepare a clear plan of campaign will, in these days of getting acquainted, set about tabulating the most flagrant errors of speech and deciding where to begin organized attack. But, as we shall see later,¹ the effective work we do in bettering expressional habits will be done chiefly through definite study toward good habits in special periods for the purpose. In our conversations we may well leave these matters largely if not altogether alone. It is only as we get spontaneous and unstudied talking first that we can hope to do effective work toward raising standards later.

The transition to prepared composition

Very early in such conversations as we have discussed, there usually appear brief incidents — perhaps two or three sentences only — which first show possibilities of evolution into work of the second type — prepared *compositions*. Formless as they generally are, the teacher may well help the children toward making a crude evalua-

¹ Chap. iv.

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tion of these. It is first important to see that the critics offer hearty commendation of whatever shows real effort. But to be of most use, this appreciation should be accompanied by suggestions of how to make the story more live and effective. Thus, the class may praise as interesting a bald statement or two about a spaniel's retrieving; but they may ask also for further matters of interest, as, what sort of dog he was, and how far he swam. A beginning is thus made at right evaluation of a story of good details that have been observed — actual sense-experience.

THREE PROCESSES OF ORGANIZED COMPOSITION

Among these criticisms in the impromptu class talks, there may presently (in grade three or four, I think, at the earliest) come the proposal, perhaps from the children themselves, that they each look about and tell next day something that they have noticed. This, rightly met, may be made the basis for actually introducing the second, entirely different sort of composition work: themes got ready by thoughtful prevision for carrying out a specific project. Now, in the development of themes or com-

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positions proper, there may be noted three important processes in which all the class take part: The first is thorough preliminary discussion; this should lead to careful planning of his work by each child. The second, following the child's presentation of an oral or written theme, is criticism by all the class of each one's work to show its values and to suggest how it could be better done. These are simply more definite developments of the free conversations. The third is a systematic campaign of study, based upon these, to achieve better organization and clearer, finer, and more vigorous modes of expression.

First, group canvass of ways and means

The proposal that each child prepare a small story to tell next day may therefore be considered crucial and dramatic, as Mr. Bennett would say. It is first of all to be promptly emphasized as an excellent and valuable suggestion; and from this, the class may proceed at once to the first stage of organized theme work, class discussion of the project and of serviceable ways and means. First may come specific suggestions of subjects to be presented, as that they all tell next time of some trick of

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a favorite pet, or the like. And in particular it should be brought out most clearly that each one had better tell of only *one thing* about his pet, not more, — so as to have room in the time the class can fairly allow him for details that will make the story real, just as in the case of the dog's retrieving.¹ Such limitation, informally suggested, is, I believe, the basis of prevision study — the first step in the long way of helping children to organization of ideas.² All this preliminary canvassing which we have noted makes a pleasantly simple sort of assignment, initiated so far as possible by the children themselves and guided by their enthusiastic suggestions of what they each will talk about.

The presentation of prepared themes

The result next day should be small, roughly planned bits of narrative, fairly distinct from the artless and unpremeditated babble that we have mainly had thus far. Such planned stories are very like the drawings which children make after their preliminary crude attempts at a prob-

¹ Well discussed in *Speaking and Writing English: A Course for the Lawrence, Mass., Elementary Schools*, by Superintendent B. M. Sheridan, pp. 19-22.

² Chap. III, pp. 68 ff.

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lem have led to the counsel that they notice more closely and try again.¹ There should, that is, be more sticking to the point the child has chosen, less fumbling, and possibly somewhat more true and clear expression. To emphasize the added importance of the occasion, we may suggest that each one tell his story from the front of the room, just as the teacher does, and that he also wait afterward to hear how the rest like what he has given. Since this is a position the child has taken before in retelling stories he has read, it need not embarrass him. We may encourage him, too, to be deliberate and unhurried, not to spoil everything by scramble.

But we should guard particularly against the danger of damping the spontaneity and joyousness in expression that we have so far taken care to foster. The timorous may be encouraged by good example. Most important of all, every one should be clearly shown that he faces no pecking or chilly critical spirit, but has the helpful and sympathetic interest of his audience. And there should surely be expected and permitted *quite everyday and childlike ways of saying things, checked by no demand of formality*. Under these conditions only can these prepared

¹ Dewey, *The School and Society* (1st ed.), pp. 57-59.

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themes be, as they should, quite as delightful and spontaneous as the previous talks — but better because they are results of forethought.

It seems essential that the child have his chance undisturbed by any interruption till he has finished what he has to say. And it is usually an excellent idea for him to give first, if he likes, his own criticism of what he has done. This often comes most spontaneously; more than one boy has thrown down his notes and cried, "Please let me do this another time; I have n't it ready." Because he was failing to hold his audience, he has discovered the necessity for thoughtful organization.¹

Second, the initiation of class criticism

After the child has given his theme and perhaps his own criticism, we may initiate the second process, the attempt at specific evaluation of his work by all his classmates. The one who has told a story may remain before the class, those who have a point to make perhaps stand, and the speaker calls on them; they thus talk to him instead of discussing him in a disconcerting fashion. The teacher is moderator or

¹ Told by Miss Lally, of the Chicago University Elementary School.

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umpire; but he is at best one of the group and a good-spirited helper. He can make himself less prominent and schoolmasterish by sitting at the back of the room, perhaps having one of the class as chairman to call the speakers and keep order.

It is of the greatest importance that the class be really left free to make the evaluation of one another's work themselves. We grown people find it difficult to realize that children's thinking and expression cannot be fairly judged by our more mature standards. Their way is a way of formlessness, of scattering interest in large wholes and irrelevant details, and absence of clear discriminations and relations. Only expression that is in a measure inexact and rough really can represent a child's own effort,¹ and so such expression alone is of value. Must we not, therefore, first discover what is the child's manner of thinking and speaking, and what he admires, as revealed in the class judgment? And then, appreciating the individual value of his best statement of an experience, as well as the need of making it more social and effective, we can work in sympathy and patience to help him see more fully and finely, think in more

¹ Cf. pp. 10-11.

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keen relation, and master the tools and forms for adequately communicating his growing thoughts.

Hence, really studying the natural class criticism of a child's effect and then helping to enlighten and ripen that judgment probably represents our wisest course. For after all, the whole matter of more effective expression can be important only in relation to its social functioning. If we are to achieve real improvement, it seems clear that a child must always realize first, through the class discussion, that he has lost or weakened his effect through unprepared, thoughtless work, or unsocial forms, or lack of clearness and vigor in his expression. He will best come in this way to appreciate what he needs to work for.

The spirit and the purpose of class criticism

The spirit and the purpose of this class evaluation are altogether determinative of its effect. The attitude in criticism which we should seek to cultivate, by both example and suggestion, is that of hearty coöperation by all the group in a creative interest in the story—an eager desire, that is, to make it most true and real and thus share in its pleasant experience, rather

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than to tear it down so that one's own story may show forth more resplendent. The teacher certainly, and so far as possible the children, must come to realize, as McMurry has it, that when a child "works carefully with a genuine purpose, the result is excellent, no matter what the critic may think."¹ Real improvement in any particular demands especially ready and hearty commending. Only in so far as this spirit obtains can the social teaching of composition become a reality.

But the important end of this class discussion is to develop *principles of criticism*; only as we secure thoughtful basing of the children's evaluations can we hope to avoid the random, fowl-like pecking at small verbal infelicities which George Meredith ascribes to the pedant, and really accomplish effective study of our problems. So far as possible we may allow the pupils to think out reasons for their own judgments by asking them to tell always why they commend one way or suggest another, and to answer and discuss such opinions freely. Under the teacher's unobtrusive guidance they should in particular be helped to test story or explanation by asking: Did we see his pictures, so that

¹ Charles McMurry, *Special Method in Language*, p. 44.

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we felt as if we had been there? or, Can we actually succeed in doing what he told us in the explanation?

Suggestions as to details and organization

The class may naturally be interested first in the vividness and interest of the details presented. The teacher's care will be to see that there is frank and hearty commendation of what is worth while in this. The critics may further request more of the same sort, and make specific suggestions of what they think would be interesting. There may be particular note, too, of good organization — of the child's having sensibly limited himself to one point, for example — and criticism of fumbling and forgetting. Since the child has had time to think first, we should also certainly expect a minimum of repeating and wandering and the like. If he leaves the story proper through not having thoroughly and definitely limited it, — as when he fails to complete the account of his dog's retrieving in order to tell of other tricks and adventures, — the class criticism should enforce and give point to the suggestion for doing this better next time. Also, unnecessary fumbling and going back, which the other children often heartily condemn, as well

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as forgetting essential things and telling them only when asked for them, may help him and us to see that we must know what our essential points are and order them very simply before we try to talk or write. In these ways the need of careful prevision may be made most clear—a need naturally intensified as the children meet more complex difficulties of organizing story materials and other problems that they find worth undertaking. And thus the group criticism becomes a strong force back of the study of prevision methods, which we have already started and which must be carried far if the children are to meet intelligently many fascinating expressional problems.¹

The special difficulties of criticizing mode of expression

We come finally to the problem of class criticism upon the child's mode and form of expression. In all composition, correction and criticism of these points appears to be the hardest problem, the most fatal in results when ill-handled, the least amenable to successful attack. In so far as we agree that the primary essential for true composition work is the child's possession

¹ Cf. chap. III, pp. 68 ff.

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of experience and of interest in presenting it, we shall no doubt realize that we cannot secure our best results in the subject by centering our attention or that of the class upon correct forms and diction, as we have too often done. It is obviously essential, in order to establish effective ways of securing ends the child desires, to help him remove many deterrents to his effect, trim rough edges of expression, and straighten wambling ideas. But it appears necessary *first* to secure a mode of procedure which shall, so far as possible, do no harm — result in no choking and inhibition of children's delightful spontaneity in expression. Mr. Chubb in his classic discussion of this subject says: "We know that teachers are only too prone, for 'clearness' sake, to change into a flat, commonplace, and narrow accuracy . . . [children's] literary surprises, which, while they may not pass muster under textbook rule, are to be more than tolerated on the score of their fresh and savory quality and rich connotation." ¹ Whatever the spirit of the teacher in criticism, it is inevitably reflected by the class. We are, it may be hoped, getting well beyond the stage of everlasting nagging revision of children's statements. Attention to matters so

¹ *Teaching of English*, p. 201.

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numerous can cause merely confusion and distraction of attention from the points the child can actually master and from whatever ideas he has to express. We have probably seen clearly enough both the choking and inhibition of expression and the unsatisfactory gains produced by that method. In place of the daily and hourly classroom correction of children's errors, we must discover if we can a more effective procedure.

For securing useful class criticism¹ of children's manner of presenting their ideas, we must first of all encourage the group judgment in commendation of whatever is well expressed, — of fineness or clearness or vigor of presentation, and pleasing form and manner, — just as in discussing ideas and their organization. It is particularly needful to commend a child's show of improvement in any of these respects. But again, criticism means the most possible only when it is definite in working toward betterment.¹ In this, good criticism is different from bad simply in the matter of a coöperative and creative as opposed to a picking and tearing

¹ Cf. *The Teaching of Elementary Composition and Grammar* (State of New Jersey, Department of Public Instruction, 1913), p. 15.

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spirit in the class critics; and this spirit it is the special business of the teacher to guide and develop. His further duty, we have noted, is to enlighten this class judgment and, by raising its standard, to raise also the level of achievement of the children in the group. We shall consider in detail later¹ specific ways for working toward these ends, as regards both establishment in habit of essential correct forms, and growth in power of consciously applying needed principles of choice and structure.

CONDITIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

The same preliminaries are necessary for written as for oral work: class discussion of projects, thoughtful individual planning, and encouragement of deliberateness of expression to avoid the evils of slapdash haste. Allowing a child to become careless in this matter of deliberateness — to confuse the rough-scribbled notes, which it is important only that he understand himself, with the painstaking work which alone is worthy of handing to some one else — may start habits fatal to decent work later. The distinction is parallel to that between free and unplanned conversations and organized, delib-

¹ Chap. IV, pp. 114 ff.

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erately given oral themes. But again, we must note particularly that writing has so many special difficulties of form which are likely to dull children's keenness that we should take pains not to demand too much writing and not to allow ourselves or the class too stringent criticism. We ought most certainly to require *no more formality and exactness of expression here than in prepared oral work.*

The proof-reading of written work

There is one special point in regard to written work on which it seems important to go into detail. This is the writer's own careful proof-reading of what he has done before he lets it go to any one else. There appears to be good reason for a child's letting his writing cool for a time — perhaps overnight — before he attempts correcting it; he is more likely to find his errors then. Success in this essential process must depend further upon his having opportunity to go over his work several times, note only one point at a time, and right every mistake he can discover. And special training in proof-reading is in all cases needed; it is not often carefully enough attended to. Because the writer will usually pass over his mistakes unnoted, —

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since he knows what he really meant, — we may frequently need to have another child read a theme aloud and show its writer, by inevitable hesitations and stumbling, that the manuscript was not prepared, in punctuation and spelling and the like, for some one else's quick and easy understanding. Since we assume that the writer had, of course, an experience or a project that he really wanted to make known, his failure to secure this effect should prove the most effective lesson possible. And we can repeat this testing of his work as often as may be necessary to demonstrate the need of conforming to social standards. Thus we may make clear and effective in each child's mind the idea of proof-reading his own work as well as he can — of self-correction. The special value of written work, aside from the teaching of its necessary mechanics, is undoubtedly what a child may thus learn through it — the possibility of going over for himself what he has written, discovering mistakes, and bettering the expression before any one else has opportunity or need to see the work.

A checking-up by class pride

But even with the best of training, the careful attention of the writer himself is rarely suffi-

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cient; we must call on the coöperative interest and communal pride of the class to check up work. Particularly, whatever will go beyond the class limits and represent all the group to some one else must be the best the children's fair judgment can make it, most of all in regard to such socially acceptable forms as all of them know. But this should be a long way from meaning correction or marking of all mistakes by the teacher and recopying of all work. We may hope for insistence in correction upon those few points which have been given complete attention until they are quite fixed in habit, and upon the particular matter which is in process of fixation at the time.¹ For these essentials no proscription can be too severe, since they are a minimal but absolute requirement. In other matters we may allow the class to present helpful and constructive suggestions, and we may make a reasonable few ourselves, provided we are very sure indeed of our wisdom and our powers of restraint; but outside a rigid and small limit, we had best realize that these are suggestions, not by any means prescriptions.

¹ Cf. pp. 114 ff.

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Making the class judgment graphic

All this is fundamental for the reason that the whole effectiveness of work toward bettering children's speech and writing appears to rest on the force of social judgment represented by the class criticism. This, to a child who has tried to interest or inform or influence his fellows, is a tremendous force. It can be made very concrete when papers are pinned on the bulletins or shown on a screen or when work is written on a board; the entire class may give judgment on written work as a whole then. Reading aloud adds the appeal to the ear, an excellent test for many points; but the eye is the sole judge of the form-conventions needful in writing. In the case of a manuscript so carelessly prepared that the necessary changes will make it bad-looking, the class judgment, if the writer's pride does not act first, may decree that the child rewrite it; but this penalty should, I think, be reserved for such occasions only. A best-possible first attempt is probably many times more valuable than a paper almost faultless from recopying; and again, second or third copies are often progressively worse than the first because they represent hateful drudgery

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and a tired, staled mind. Rewriting to do a thing better should of course be permitted within reason.

In making this class judgment more determinative, we may gain much by a method of putting it in graphic form. A plan that seems very satisfactory in the working out has been developed by Professor C. S. Pendleton, of Wisconsin University and the Wisconsin High School. After all the themes of a set have been given or read before the class, each child hands in a folded ballot, unsigned, with a grade for every theme including his own, and a tabulation of these grades — from *E* to *P* — is bulletined. Again, the children may by vote select certain papers for exhibition on the bulletins, or for preservation in files, or for publication or presentation before the assembly or elsewhere; or they may decide which of the letters they have written is the best actually to send; or by a like process refuse acceptance or publication to other work. This vote may include judgment on the appearance of the manuscript.

The question of correction marks on papers

As to the indication of mistakes on pupils' papers, many teachers would end the régime of

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wholesale red ink by proscription of any mark on a paper; they would substitute class work on common errors, blackboard themes, and, where mistakes persist, conferences of the individual writers with the teacher or, for correcting one or two specific forms, with a pupil critic. And they would require each child's hunting out his mistakes for himself, unaided by suggestive symbols.¹ Thus, a pupil might have on his paper, or on one page of it, simply the number of mistakes of a given sort, like failure to indicate a sentence; it would be his business to attend to these matters before his paper could be accepted. For keeping effective track of pupils' work, a most practicable arrangement is the theme-card for each pupil — first suggested by Professor Barrett Wendell and developed by Professor C. S. Baldwin. On this card the most important elements of weakness and of strength in each theme may be briefly noted — whether form-matters, wording or sentence structure, or larger aspects of organization. These notes can then be made use of in conferences and in checking up later themes for recurring tendencies.

¹ Klapper, *Teaching of English*, chap. vii; Orr, "A Revolt and its Consequences," *English Journal*, November, 1914, (vol. iii, p. 546), etc.

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It seems clear that for such essentials as we have once established,¹ the only standard we can hold is either one hundred per cent accomplishment or zero; a youngster either has these mastered or he has not; there is *no place for gradations and middle ground*. It is possible by holding to such standards to establish a true idea of thoroughness and honesty in these matters. And it may be hoped that teachers would not be so likely as under the usual régime to extend this method into rigid and deadly insistence that every infelicity be reworded. In advocating restraint in these matters, we cannot call too strongly to mind the huge difficulties of good expression, especially in writing — most of us do not find it altogether simple for ourselves — or insist too heartily that the forms demanded shall in every case be very few and adequately prepared for before they are demanded at all.

Methods and values of conference

This, of course, means frequent conference with the backward pupils and checking up to see that essential points grow toward establishment. Well-handled conference with those who have

¹ As to the method of such establishment, see chap. iv, pp. 136 ff.

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failed to master a needed form — secured anywhere during study periods or while the other pupils are writing — may be made the most effective part of the teacher's work in composition. And of course the uses of conference are not confined to correction of wrong forms. It is even more valuable in helping toward conscious mastery of points of clearness or artistry of expression. The teacher here represents the class judgment. And while he may well offer suggestions that are in advance of what the class could give, he must exercise the greatest care that they are not above the individual child's level of seeing useful relations or discriminations of word or idea. It is generally well merely to suggest specific betterment and leave the child to work out his own method. It is hoped that reducing the number of things to be worked for and so concentrating on them as to secure their establishment may result in a more than compensatory saving for the teacher, not alone of red ink, but of nerves.

THE THIRD PROCESS OF PREPARED COMPOSITION — ORGANIZED STUDY

So much for the child's organization and preparation of his oral or written themes and for the

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class help in correction and criticism of what he presents. We come, then, to the third process already mentioned for working out prepared compositions: organized study to raise the class standards of thought and of expression. The teacher's best office here, it has been suggested, is to help enlighten the communal criticism and discussion, to make it constantly keener while keeping it fair and friendly, and to attempt formulating principles of both organization and expression. Thus, we may succeed in making children's composition development a slowly upward spiral movement, in which we return again and again to the same sorts of problems in story-telling or explanation or discussion and meeting of common difficulties, — but each time discover, together with more complex difficulties, greater power and sureness in handling them and in judging our own and other people's results. Out of these expressional problems discovered in the class discussions, attempted orally or in writing, and criticized by the class, should, I maintain, come all the study of technique that we need attempt, whether of organization, wording, or sentence-building, or the forms and mechanics of speaking and writing. In the actual work of the children on vital prob-

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lems, the teacher discovers their needs and lays plans for campaigns to bridge over deficiencies and clear *impasses*. And surely no other difficulties need be attacked than those the children actually encounter in their carrying out of real and varied projects in the schoolroom day by day.

We have thus far in this study seen how, from the formless, non-social talk of little children, the combined forces of (1) vital subject-matter opening up projects requiring expression, and (2) an interested group of coöperative workers and critics may aid in the development of really effective expression. The needs of a small society for entertainment and information and for coöperation in solving common problems — needs that may reach far beyond the limits of the group — require more and more thoughtful and formed expression. Thus first arises discussion of projects and of how to carry them out, and this in turn may lead to the carefully planned oral or written theme.

The second factor, we have noted, is the class criticism of each child's performance — their appreciation of what is good in ideas or method and their suggestions of better ways. This judg-

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ment, under the teacher's guidance, must be made as fair as possible, and above all its spirit must be helped to become truly coöperative and creative. But we may also encourage the children to keen exaction, as well as commendation, of each one's best, and even to impatience — shown with all possible courtesy, but unmistakably — with inattention to what they all know to be requisite — with lack of preparation and with carelessness of essential forms, and the like.

Finally, from this class criticism may come the initiation of organized study, directed by the skillful judgment of the teacher, to insure better meeting of problems. This may well arise in appreciation of what is organized and expressed with clarity and vigor and beauty, or in realization of the need of forms or conventions. It may proceed oftentimes to long and arduous and determined work to help gain the best results in attempts at expressing experiences and the ideas to which they give rise. The general process of composition development may then be represented roughly as follows: —

Vital subject-matter plus interest in other people's experiences	both stimulate and help to socialize	the child's raw non-social impulse to expression
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The remainder of this study is concerned with systematic examination for discovering and applying principles, first, of thought organization or prevision, and second, of effective oral and written expression.¹

¹ Chief emphasis is here put upon compositions directed to the class audience or judged by them. But there are, of course, other sorts. In particular, there is value in certain intimate bits of autobiography or opinion which pupils will write for a really sympathetic teacher, but, particularly in the high-school years, would by no means publish before the class.

For the half-dozen *forms* in each year's work which the class have fully canvassed and ranked as *quite unacceptable*, I am now using but one correction symbol, a star (*). Each appearance of this star in a theme margin cuts off a large slice of the grade, which, aside from this, represents the *ideas* and their *expression*, without relation to *forms* (cf. chap. iv). Under this system, these particular mistakes quickly drop away, and my attention is left comparatively free for constructive criticism.

III

THE ORGANIZATION OF IDEAS

A. LIMITATION AND GROUPING OF SUBJECT-MATTER

HOW THE NEED OF LIMITATION COMES TO BE REALIZED

WE have seen how, in the free conversations of the classroom and in their attempts to give prepared themes, children may be helped to discover the inadequacy of unorganized, hit-and-miss stories and explanations.¹ They will come to realize that these, to be effective, need to have abundance of concrete detail. Thus they may discover for themselves that they will do well, in the brief time that the group can fairly allow each member, to limit themselves to a single point or brief incident; for example, that they had better make very clear one step in furnishing a doll house, rather than try to explain the whole process. Obviously this principle of

¹ See pp. 45 (and footnote); 51.

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limitation must not be forced too far with little children; for they probably see at first, in a huge experience like a circus or a fire, only rather undefined high lights and bits of vivid color, and they cannot present much detail of appearance or sound or the like on any one point of it. But gradually, as they come to realize, from the class suggestion and demand, the value and interest of specific points well presented, — things they have touched or smelled or seen, — they may try to observe more closely and accurately a variety of interesting details: things funny or significant of character like a man elbowing his way through a crowd, or details necessary for understanding a process like making a kite.¹

For example, if the story is of Johnny's rescue from the water at the picnic, the point may well be made that we had better leave out everything about the occasion save that one matter — begin, perhaps, with Johnny walking with bravado on the log over the river, and end with his being pulled out dripping and screaming. To make this one thing a real happening by means of concrete detail will certainly occupy a youngster's time and best attention in preparing a page-long story or a short oral theme; he will

¹ See chap. II, p. 22.

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only spread haphazard over a larger subject. This approach toward limitation to what can be given so specifically as to make it an actual experience for the audience is probably the first step to be taken, whether in the lower grades or in high school, toward helping a child organize the ideas he has to express.

DETERMINING ON THE MOST EFFECTIVE DETAILS

Having so limited a subject, a child may next go through it and discover all the things he wants to tell; perhaps he will jot them down roughly. It is well for the child to get before him all his ideas, so that he will not forget any essential matters — to make, as Professor Slater has it, “a complete mental inventory” on the subject.¹ For instance, in planning a story of the rain that stopped the picnic, he may want to note down a good many details — remarks and giggling, overturned baskets, and collisions in the scurry to shelter — so that the most possible of this live detail may be at hand when he wants it.² Such an exercise as listing and selecting possibly useful details for a story or a letter may be worked

¹ *Freshman Rhetoric*, chap. I, p. 5.

² Cf. Baldwin, *Writing and Speaking*, pp. 111 and 122-23.

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out often on the blackboard by the whole class; it appears to furnish excellent preparation for talking or writing. In doing this, we will help each child, so far as he can, to be conscious of his readers' or hearers' needs — to think the story from their point of view — in order to make the incident he is to tell a real experience to them and thus win their interest. But this is probably not a thing we can *tell* him with much effect as a general principle; he will best learn his weakness, as we have seen, from the actual response of his audience to the story he attempts; then we can help him to formulate a better plan of attack for his next project.

THE PROBLEM OF GROUPING IDEAS

The next large principle for a child to learn is the necessity and the method of stating to himself beforehand the *main points or ideas* he is to present, so that he may know exactly what he is about and where he is at each moment of his progress. Finding out how to do this in very simple stories in the primary grades is the first step toward learning to group the ideas of large and complex experiences later. And certainly it is an inescapable preliminary to *arranging* the points — the subject of the second division

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of this chapter.¹ Hence the present section will consider the child's most effective mode of learning to sort out the ideas he wants to express and throw them into small heaps or bundles for his own convenience in presentation and for his reader's in understanding him.

In many good courses in drawing, the importance of planning is discovered in ways similar to this. For example, in the section on Art in the *Teachers College Elementary School Course, Grade I*, we learn how the teacher or the class in friendly fashion criticizes the child's rough drawings: "Your picture tells me that these people were larger than their house; is that what you mean?" — and the like.² The next time, the children are helped to do better by trying to describe their picture first or sketch in the relative positions and sizes. It is a parallel to this that I am suggesting as a mode of approach to the subject of organization in composition classes.

FIRST TYPE: THE PLAN FOR SMALL, FAMILIAR STORIES

For the small, limited subject which the children may be encouraged to attempt first, the

¹ Pages 90 ff.

² Chapter on "Art," page 49 (1908).

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planning required is not a very difficult matter. We may begin it as soon as the children have gained freedom and confidence in telling their prepared stories before the class — probably in the fourth grade. For developing the first ideas of how best to set about their work here, we may help them to see how the stories which they know are built. From their retelling of stories in the kindergarten and the first grades many of them have doubtless come to discover and use the plan of their author without at all realizing it. Now, when the need for consciously planning their own work comes, it may be time to work out definitely the scheme of construction in several stories they already know well. By going through *The Discontented Pine Tree*, for instance, it is easy for the children to discover the string of incidents which compose it and probably to tell it all in a sentence like: "This story tells how an unhappy little pine tree wanted glass leaves, then gold leaves, and then green leaves, but at last it was glad to get its own needles back again." Making such a plan sentence is a matter simply of telling shortly *what happened next* throughout the story.¹ But in its crude way, this elementary process represents

¹ Cooley, *Language Teaching in the Grades*, p. 31. .

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the essential beginning of grouping for organization and stating as a few practicable points the ideas to be presented. We may speak of this result as the plan the author probably used in writing his story.

Planning the children's own small bits of incident: the plan sentence

Exercises like this, repeated many times for all sorts of stories the children know, may be made the basis for their own beginnings in organization. When the children have frankly criticized one another's attempts at stories as fumbling and, in the words of one Polish boy, "all under another through," it should probably come as a most acceptable suggestion that they try using the scheme of the author of *The Discontented Pine Tree*. At once the class as a group may attack some very small incident they have in mind and work out a plan sentence for it. In the story of Johnny's accident at the picnic — rather than the whole picnic, of course — the sentence might be, "This story is about what Johnny was doing to be smart, how he gave a yell and fell in the river, and how Mr. Jones pulled him out sopping wet." By way of an introduction to more complex problems later, it may be

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useful sometimes to put each small part of the plan between parallel lines, as in this plotting of *Epaminondas*: —

In this story are: —

Epaminondas's
first visit
to his
Aunt; the
cake

His
second
visit:
the but-
ter

His
third
visit: !
the
puppy

and so on to —

Epaminondas
at home:
the pies.

Obviously, these plan sentences will not appear in the theme itself, any more than in the stories the children have read. They represent simply the necessary preparation. They should first be worked out by each child as a study in prevision in a number of exercises, and both the plans and the stories built on them discussed by the class. Later the class may be asked to give the plan sentence which must have guided the child who tells or reproduces a story. It seems most necessary to cultivate in children the power of watching for the organization of what they hear and read and planning carefully what they want to tell; and it is probably in simple units like this that they can first learn to

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do so. Thus, in grades or even in high school, where we find children without ready power both of discovering the organization of stories or other small units and of planning a like simple organization for the one-topic subjects that they must be able first to present, it is likely that our first step in guiding them toward ability in organization should be to help them work out the basic sort of problems that we have so far considered.

ORGANIZATION STUDY IN MORE COMPLEX PROBLEMS

Only when these earliest projects have been handled pretty well individually by the children of any group can we pass on to the organization of larger subjects by the same sort of method. The first work on more complex problems may consist of bringing to a point the conversation about some broad experience common to all the class—perhaps the camp life of Indians. This may be carried out purely as an organization exercise—not of necessity in preparation for any theme. First, as various interesting points are suggested, the teacher or a pupil may note them on the blackboard. It is obviously best not to attempt handling too many details at first; but some fifteen or twenty

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may perhaps be taken down to work on. It is evident that there will be a great deal of overlapping, and broader and lesser points mixed higgledy-piggledy. The teacher may now suggest: "Suppose we put these in three or four groups or columns something like the happenings in *Epaminondas*, so that we can see them more clearly. What shall we call these groups?" The pupils will make many more or less valid suggestions and debate them; so far as practicable, the class decision should probably determine. Though a good teacher's suggestion rightly carries greatest weight, in cases like this it should rarely be prescriptive. In proportion as he truly realizes that there are usually as many good ways of organizing materials of a complex experience as there are live and interested people to attempt it, the teacher will wait for good suggestions from his class and encourage their efforts at intelligent criticism of those given. If various pupils propose methods which the rest do not endorse, each may sometimes be allowed to work out his plan in full and defend it; the upshot of the discussion may well be that each method is fairly practicable, depending, of course, on the precise purpose the child is working toward.

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All the details suggested may next be canvassed, some doubtless rejected, and the remainder sorted into such rough groups as the class have settled upon, perhaps in parallel columns.¹ The final step of the grouping experiment with such a problem of the children's real experience may often be the construction of a crude sort of outline, built on the model of the plan sentences the children have already made. In the case of studying Indian life, the result in grade eight or nine might be something like this:

"I'm going to tell about (1) the Indians' tepees; (2) their hunting and fishing; and (3) how the squaws prepared the food.

"(1) In this part comes how they made the tepees out of poles and skins and ornamented them.

"(2) This tells the weapons the Indians used and how they trapped animals for their skins, chased buffalo, and speared fish.

"(3) Here I'll tell about what they cooked things in, and how they skinned animals and roasted them, and boiled meat and corn by putting hot stones in the water."

¹ This stage of the process and the subsequent arrangement of points (cf. p. 90 of this chapter) is well illustrated in Klap-
per's *Teaching of English*, chap. VI, pp. 64-66.

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Teachers must, I believe, cultivate surer power of judging the adequacy and practicability of very rough plans, and must help children in special exercises like this to group and arrange their ideas effectively. The problem of arrangement is considered as a separate process in the second part of this chapter.¹

Similarly, as soon as the stories the children read go beyond the stage of brief chains of incidents which they can represent readily in a plan sentence, a wider type of organization is requisite. Of course it is possible to present the plan of *Rip Van Winkle* as a succession of small points, such as: a description of the village; Rip's shiftlessness and laziness; his wife's tongue, and so on. But this is cumbersome and bungling, and the whole can be seen far better when these points are grouped into two or three larger divisions — perhaps (1) Rip's life in the village; (2) his mountain adventures; and (3) his return. The same procedure may likewise be used with the findings of all sorts of observations and class expeditions in nature-study or civics or industries, with the review of materials for geography or history, and in attempts to correlate the matter of several school subjects. Even mem-

¹ See pp. 90 *ff.*

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orized facts, though they are of little or no *composition* value, may be used to advantage in this sort of organization lessons. In listening to one another's compositions, too, it is of the greatest value to have pupils make note of main divisions and report on their practicability.

The value of study of organization

The importance of this sort of study makes it apparently well worth presenting in detail; for it is a phase of school work in which too little specific help seems to have been given in the past — often only the general and rigid and usually futile requirement that teachers demand from children the logical ordering of their ideas and the organization of composition outlines. The result has been that college teachers find the great majority of students who come to them unable, in spite of tireless drill in outlining and briefing, to work out the *main divisions* of chapter or essay, no matter how obviously organized. We do not in fact, I believe, teach children to study and “read in ever larger units” as Professor Hosic has expressed it. A contributory cause for this may possibly be that while we have given attention freely to the paragraph, and usually centered our study in it, we have

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carried on little organized development of topics beyond the single-paragraph unit. For whatever we mean by the term in formal rhetoric I believe that most people, teachers included, inevitably associate the word with the indentation on the page. And while such paragraphs as we study in grades and high school may appear as main units or topics of a piece of work, it is obvious that in any large whole they do not. It is only, then, as we carefully group and organize into larger units or topics the ideas we derive from the study of paragraphs, in somewhat the fashion we have followed in working out larger units of this second type of organization, that we shall gain satisfactory results in reading and study in grammar grades and high school. Studies in grouping subject-matter such as those outlined above appear to be the most helpful approach to this problem. We may best handle them first as exercises for all the class; and indeed, for any problem presenting new difficulties, class study usually proves to be the best method of discovering varied suggestions. Later we may assign projects of the sort as individual problems. Thus we may work steadily at the central point of the difficulties of prevision.

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Early themes not to be written on such large outlines

But it seems well to come back to the idea of limitation of subject with which we set out in this chapter. As this study is trying to develop it, composition is the expression always of realized experience, and must be so taught as invariably to present problems for truly concrete and specific statement. Hence the suggestion appears essential that the materials organized in the lessons just cited had better be used as composition subject-matter in the elementary school *only as each child selects for his topic one definite small part of the subject* — in the study of Indians, for example, the weapons for hunting and fishing, or the process of boiling food. The time or space at the grade school child's command averages probably a page or a page and a half of written work or a slightly larger unit of speech. Within these limits he can present the most that he has perceived directly or in imagination, and thus make his experience a real one to his audience, on only a fully limited subject. There is the further advantage in such a project that each child is provided with something to express that he can himself organize and

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handle independently of the class outline of the larger subject.

The organization and writing of longer themes

When the time comes for the writing of longer themes, these may be naturally enough developed, either by having various groups of the children take each a part of the subject, or the same pupil develop these phases one after another at different times. Thus there may be built a theme on an entire large subject like Indian Camp Life. But all the themes which are to be combined must, of course, be written with the idea of their working harmoniously together, and they must be criticized with that in view. This problem need hardly be attempted very often below the eighth grade. It seems necessary that the children be really able *first* to organize smaller topics by themselves and write on them effectively, and that they have gained through the planning of larger units some power of grouping the ideas of their experience into a small number of topics convenient for handling. It is on this basis that they may best begin the transition to longer pieces of work. As each of the groups which the children made for the Indian study, for example, contains a series

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of points or incidents like that of the smaller stories they have previously organized, they know how to handle these. But there are difficulties in getting equally appealing and valuable subject-matter to cover the whole ground, and particularly in stretching children's attention over the process of constructing and criticizing a large composition whole. In high school, as the child's power of sustained effort grows, he may be encouraged to organize for himself and prepare as a single project, first, themes with two large topics two or three pages in length, and later, larger units such as we have seen the class as a group learning to get into shape for handling. The sole necessary condition appears to be that the child undertake only those problems which he can handle by himself with some reasonable confidence and success. But up to the emergence of this type of theme, it seems very doubtful indeed whether it is at all important, except in the case of dialogue, to teach anything but one-paragraph themes.

We have considered so far two types of organization, or what we may, if we prefer, call one type in two distinct stages of complexity. The first consists of a number of small points or incidents, like those in such stories as *The Dis-*

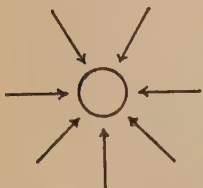
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contented Pine Tree, which can be summed up in a single easy survey — stated perhaps in a plan sentence; this may be represented so — |||||. The second, when the speaker or writer has more details than he or the reader can readily keep in mind in this way, we may represent as a grouping of several simple units such as that above, so — ||||| ||||| ||| — to whatever range of topics and sub-topics. It is worth noting that few topics — two or three or four — generally form a better basis for organizing one's own thought or for enabling some one else to grasp it than do a larger number. But attempting to present materials under the headings "Introduction," "Body," and "Conclusion" — an apparent outgrowth of Aristotle's unassailable but unfortunately applied remark that a story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end — is, of course, no true *grouping* of the ideas, and should, I maintain, never be accepted as a substitute for one; it is the "Body" that must be grouped. The same may be said of biographical outlines under the outworn and obvious headings of "Birth and Parentage," "Early Education," and so on, or presentation of mental, moral, and physical benefits.

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THIRD TYPE: INTERPRETIVE ORGANIZATION

For what we may classify as interpretive work — the expression of opinions of any sort¹ — a further step is needed in the grouping preparatory to writing or speaking. It may be seen that the development of this type, whether it is argumentative or purely explanatory, centers about a statement of opinion; we might represent it, as different from the other two, so:



The arrows are supposed to represent observable *facts* or other valid data, and they are to be thought of as underlying the opinion, whether simply making plain its meaning and bearings or enforcing its ac-

ceptance. We may note here that this is the sole type of writing which has an interpretation sentence or statement of the upshot of the whole matter: the *subject* under discussion, that is, plus the *predicate*, the author's statement of his conclusion about it.²

¹ Cf. chap. I, pp. 13 and 28.

² The familiar term "topic sentence" apparently includes (a) sentences suggesting or naming the subject of a paragraph or larger unit — a sort of title-sentence; (b) the plan sentence

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The children early meet this interpretive form of writing and speaking, as we have seen, in their attempts to develop an explanation of what is difficult or a defense of their practical judgments, such as, "We ought to do this way about it." Clearly, before he sets out on this way a child needs to have his judgment definitely and unmistakably worded as the center of his notes or plan, to make clear what he is supporting or explaining. Probably he had better write it, then, at the head of his list of points. For all the examples, the details he gives, as of cause or effect and the like, are there for its clarification and support. Obviously, in completed work this sentence may be the center of either a paragraph or part of one, a chapter, or any larger unit. But the child's first and chief acquaintance with the form is made in the short, one-topic oral themes in which he defends a preference, tells what ought to be done about something, or explains a general statement — a proverb, for instance, or a difficult sentence from his text or story — often by examples from his everyday experience.

which we have been considering; and (c) the interpretive sentence, used only in this third type of composition.

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The values of study in this type

This whole study of interpretive organization has fundamental values which, I believe, we rarely secure — a failure that we have not often realized. By way of experiment, some of us have asked many classes of normal-school juniors and seniors — high-school graduates all, and about to become teachers — to study the first chapter of the McMurrays' *Method of the Recitation* and find a statement of its principal idea. Next day we have asked them to write out from their open books its central or topic thought, a sentence that should sum up the whole matter. It happens that in the twelve pages of the chapter this thought is restated in various forms no less than seven times. Yet only from ten to fifteen per cent of each class have usually succeeded in getting the sentence fairly stated in some form — never more. It is not wholly these young people's fault, I believe. They simply have not been taught the essentials of various types of organization, and particularly that of larger units than the single paragraph, about a central or topic sentence.

We have so far seen that children, in the or-

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ganization of their experience for its effective expression, may well begin with a decided limitation of the subject to be handled, so as to give place, in the time each one may fairly take, for full and concrete details. They should proceed next to reviewing these details and selecting such as will best serve the purpose in hand, and then to grouping those chosen in the simplest manner possible. Real and sound grouping according to one of three simple types is here presented as the true basis of the prevision problem. The first type is a mere string of very simple incidents or points, as in children's bits of narrative of their adventures. The second consists in putting into a few convenient groups of such points a number of details too large to be handled in the first way, as in the account of Indian life or the story of *Rip Van Winkle*. The third type, the method for explaining and supporting one's opinions, is accomplished by massing all the ideas or groups of ideas to be presented about a central thought or judgment — a subject for discussion plus a predication about it — to show that they all underlie or support that judgment; this is illustrated in explanation of sentences, debate about projects, and the like.

It has seemed essential to go so far into detail

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about the subject of grouping ideas and to leave the parallel development, that of arrangement, to the following section, simply because the grouping of ideas seems to have been the place of least success in former teaching of composition, has had the least attention, yet is after all the basic and necessarily preliminary process.

B. ARRANGEMENT AND CONNECTION OF MATERIAL

ARRANGEMENT OF IDEAS — A PROBLEM IN PSYCHOLOGY

To complete the study of organizing ideas for composition, there remains consideration of their arrangement and connection. The need for arranging points to be presented is generally expressed in a demand for logical order. But the difficulty is by no means met with a knowledge of such useful, direct highways of thought as Aristotle's categories. For since real composition is a matter always of adapting materials of one's own experience to the comprehension of some one else, the problem has to be studied always in relation, not alone to the subject-matter to be expressed, but also to the precise knowledge and capabilities of the person who is to view it. The one governing idea

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of all these methods of arrangement for composition prevising may be stated in a sort of key principle of the arrangement methods: *Related ideas must be kept together, in an order that is clear and easy for the reader to follow.*

FOUR TYPES OF ARRANGEMENT

Four large types of arrangement of ideas for the purpose of making them easily understandable to a reader or hearer are discussed in this chapter. The *first* and almost universal one is time order; it is used probably in nine tenths of the cases where ideas are presented in words. But it is not by any means all-sufficient; modifications of time order are necessary almost from the start of composition work in providing for the proper beginnings of stories and explanations. Besides, the demand for force and vigor in organization appears early, and gives rise to the *second* arrangement method discussed, the emphasis principle. Again, clearness is by no means always to be attained through time order; and so there must be developed a *third* broad group of principles which we may summarize by noting that they suggest telling basic things first. These also are, of course, combined with the time order in many cases, but they so

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fundamentally modify it that they have to be considered as a distinct method. And finally, — probably one of the latest relations to be developed in children's composition work, — it is sometimes most practicable to present sense-impressions as they are observed in their space relation; this is the *fourth* type of arrangement.

THE EARLIEST ARRANGEMENT PROBLEMS — TIME ORDER

In the early work which children do in composition, arrangement is a matter of practically no difficulty. As appears to have been demonstrated by many experiments, these should be quite simple narratives and, later, processes which move straight forward in time order. We have seen in our consideration of grouping and plan sentences how the child may be helped to learn the value of a simple sort of prevision for his own stories through seeing it in others' work and discovering its lack in his own. There is little further to the technique of oral or written work at this stage — the type of practically all the composition in the elementary schools. However, additional points soon require attention. For instance, the audience may often note scantiness of detail or of needed information especially

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at the start of a story or process. In an explanation, the speaker may very often have failed to tell just what he was explaining, and after he has finished, the children may remind him of their confusion. It does not take much class discussion to clinch this point firmly; an explanation, we see, must always tell first what it is explaining.

There is a somewhat similar need in stories, but the matter is rather more delicate and difficult there. To demand that every incident the children write or tell must begin according to formula with such sentences as, "I was going south on Third Street with Willis Jones about four o'clock last Friday afternoon," will go a long way toward killing all originality and spontaneous happiness in expression; it must also produce very bunglesome results. It appears not to be a true principle in any case; good stories rarely start so. To be sure, something of time, place, and persons is always needed, and the children, with their natural interest in specific names and occasions, will very probably ask for it. But there is a yet more imperative demand; the thing to do at the start of a story is to stir the interest of the audience.¹

¹ Cf. C. S. Bailey, *For the Story-Teller*, chap. III: "When the Curtain Rises"; cf. also the emphasis principle, p. 94.

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Next in importance comes what the class need in order to make the story real and clear; what this is may be derived from their demands in criticism. It seems probable that if we attempt to formulate this — I doubt whether we shall need to do so — it will appear something like: We must always tell early whatever the audience need to make the story opening *clear* and *vivid*.

THE EMPHASIS PRINCIPLE

So far, we have discussed merely how simple may be the prevision, built on a plan sentence and in direct time order, for such early problems as telling a brief incident with descriptive detail or explaining a process. A second arrangement principle often proves helpful in these stories — discovered perhaps in grade five or six — and of greater value still to later types of composition work. We often feel hopeless at the ragged endings of small incidents and the like; the child sometimes stands awkward, uncertain himself whether he has finished what he had to tell. Then, from a group discussion of how to meet this problem, the children may come to value the contribution which special attention to the placing of details may make.

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The need of getting interest in story beginnings has suggested that we *begin with vivid or striking detail* — action or color or the like; we may now see the even greater value of *saving for the end something significant or unexpected* — something that tells most about the persons in the story or the upshot of the happening. The teacher need not look far to find in short stories many excellent examples to illustrate and enforce this important point. In every case, I believe, we should encourage for these places *concrete details*, and not general impressions or other opinions.

Thus, we may note that what we first observe about people is often some extreme of dress or action; this naturally comes early in our account. But in most cases what is far more significant about the person — a small bronze veteran-button, or an unobtrusive, kindly word or action — is not so quickly discoverable; it is, besides, the one best thing to reserve to the last to make us acquainted with him. Likewise, a good thing for the first of a story is action or other observable detail which at once and sharply strikes upon the attention. For the end comes best the idea which gives the story its individual and sometimes surprising turn — reverses the movement of its plot or our estimate of its

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characters. A classic example is, of course, Maupassant's *The Necklace*; *The Wolf and the Three Pigs* likewise represents the principle. Good and effective details about people all around us may be observed and massed to give a like final effect, as of a boastful boy confronted suddenly with real danger, or of a man sitting, buried in his newspaper, in a street car, who discovers that his wife has stood for some time watching him. The idea of limitation already developed may be helpful in suggesting that the story end promptly after this determining incident. Children's small stories may be helped to gain remarkably in firmness from study to use this simple *emphasis principle*. And its later application to many other types of themes such as descriptions and arguments is too well known to require more than mention. Next to realization of the value of specific sense-detail, this is, I believe, the most significant principle for securing vigor and interest in children's compositions, whether in grades or in high school.

The children have worked, up to this point, to gain a good grasp on arrangement of limited subjects — incidents and processes, chiefly in time order. Except for the suggestions already developed about starting right and about ar-

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ranging one's observings for most emphasis, both the simple stories children tell and their explanations of how to make a cake or a rabbit-house or to ring in a fire alarm may be made quite clear by chronicling them in the order of happening. And there is almost no end to these subjects which children may discover and which they must learn to handle with real facility before they attempt more difficult arrangements. To be able to tell or write a small incident shorn of needless tag-ends and so filled with live detail that it reconstructs an experience in the imagination of its hearers is one of the most generally useful forms of art. Many teachers who have helped normal children in this, without blocking their way with needless criticisms and formulary exactions, know how beautifully a majority of them — even the most unpromising sometimes — come to such power in a social classroom. Thus is developed one of the most pleasant social graces, the basis of charming conversation and letter-writing. It probably deserves more school time and far more real help in the way of tactful constructive criticism than we usually have given.

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THE PRINCIPLES OF BASES FIRST

Only when children are reasonably sure of their ground in this matter of time-order stories and process themes — not perhaps before the seventh or even the eighth grade — may they profitably attempt more complicated types of arrangement. They should now have grasped definitely, through working it out in innumerable plain problems, the value and method of grouping their limited subject-matter and building a plan sentence to develop it on. There now comes the need for solving problems that will not yield to an attack in time order. From the studies here begun, we may hope with wise guidance to bring to light the third, probably the most significant and practicable of the principles of arrangement. It consists of two modes which for convenience we may call the group of *putting basic things first*, and includes giving first (a) the apparatus and the principle of a game or other process, and (b) what is known to the reader or is easy for him to grasp. In our discussion of how to secure digestion of experience¹ we have already come upon the most important principles and procedures in this group.

¹ See chap. I, pp. 8-14.

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The apparatus and purpose first

The first problem to require one of these methods may very probably be the attempt to explain an interesting game. The boys, perhaps, want to teach the girls captain ball. The girls are interested, and very courteous in trying to make the best of what the boys tell them; but actually they can't get much out of it. Here usually the teacher must show to what the failure is due, and the class may then set to work on a plan for making the subject clear. It develops that the first essential in this case is to know the court or ground used and the markings on it; to begin at the beginning of the game without knowing this is merely confusing. Yet even when we have the apparatus in order and understood, our natural tendency to go right ahead is likely to make us omit something else that is essential; we may neglect altogether to tell what it is all about. Very likely it will require the breakdown of a second attempt also to demonstrate that as near as possible to the start in such explanations as this, but generally after the account of the grounds or apparatus, the point or purpose of the whole must appear. A good deal of practice on problems of this type

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is necessary; they demand pretty close thinking. And finally the class may attempt stating this principle for themselves as essential to many cases of the sort, particularly for games and processes — whether captain ball or cards or cookery. This is the first of the essential arrangements under the head of *basis first*; we may call it the principle of *giving apparatus and purpose first*. Of course grade-school children are able to handle only fully concrete and observable cases of this; and even of these, the more complex examples like baseball are probably quite beyond their power till the later years of high school.

The known and simple first

The second means of arranging with *basis first* appears when the class attempt such an eminently social project as explaining for a smaller child, or for some one who lives in a different place, some matter quite definite and clear to the writers. Corn-growing may be thus obvious to prairie farm-children or shaft-sinking to those in a mining district. Or a child may investigate some observable new matter like horseshoeing, and, as he begins without knowing anything about it himself, have the advan-

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tage of better imagining the needs of his hearers. The best way of studying the problem of expressing such matters is to have the child tell what he knows before the class. He may then be helped to discover that his success is in proportion to his care to start with what his friends already know or can easily build up from their actual experience, as his teacher will probably have suggested to him in the preliminary discussion. For instance, he may tell them that a horse's hoof is like a finger nail, only all one nail and very thick over the whole bottom of the foot. Or he may compare veins of metal to the filling between layers in a cake, and the shaft and cage to a bucket in a well or an elevator going down into the earth. Where he fails, as he will in greatest measure do at first, we may help him to discover that he has not thus figured on what his audience can best see first, and built on that. Teachers and texts are supposed to know and use this arrangement principle above all others; to the extent to which we realize and develop its possibilities in our pupils, we may make it extraordinarily valuable for getting the children into a teacher attitude toward the subjects they attempt to tell about. We may call this the principle of *telling first what*

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is known or simple for the reader or hearer. A great many exercises in this type richly repay the effort of working with them. Their chief object is to determine how we must begin and proceed to make what we know a reality to people who have not the opportunity of observing it for themselves. As a preliminary study, then, we need to discuss in class, not alone the limitation and grouping, but the precise experience and knowledge of the people whom we are going to interest and help with our explanation — as in the case of the paper-making themes¹ — and how best to meet their needs.

The two arrangement methods which we have just been considering present specific directions for giving basic things first, essential to clearness in explaining any but the most utterly simple matters: beginning with (1) fundamentals like the apparatus or purpose in a game, or (2) the phase of the subject known to the audience or most readily comprehensible to them. Each method is worth long and careful experimentation and thoughtful class criticism of results secured. For a child must himself come to realize the need of these in his one-topic themes on facts of his concrete experience and, with the

¹ See chap. I, p. 32.

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help and suggestions of teacher and classmates in discussion, master their difficulties; if he merely has the principles dictated to him and is directed to apply them, he will scarcely gain power which will serve him in high school or afterward for mastering the longer, complex problems which he must organize and present.

PROBLEMS OF ARRANGEMENT IN VISUAL DESCRIPTION

The sketch outline first

The type of arrangement remaining to be discussed concerns the ordering of details according to their position in space; it is used most often in recording observations which cannot be handled in time order — descriptions of rooms and landscapes and personal appearance, for instance. Such problems, indeed, appear in a most rudimentary form in the child's attempt to give a sentence or two of descriptive detail — of his dog or chum — in the incidents he tells. The story-teller or other early type of theme has small place, to be sure, for extensive account of still life — buildings, and people not doing something, and the like.¹ But the audience, stimulated and encouraged in their inter-

¹ Cf. chap. I, p. 5.

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est in vivid impressions, may come early to ask for and to approve details of color and shape and the like as well as of sound and movement. In adding a sentence or two of this sort, the children may presently find out the necessity for the outline of what they describe — person or animal or boat. The class may want to know the size of the child in the story and whether he was fat or lank; for we often want the author to help us see his own hero, not leave us always to make up one. How much the encouragement of questioning of this sort heightens the effect and where it begins to be overdone must be decided by watching carefully the children's actual responses.

In the smallest efforts of this sort to give a clear visual impression, the basis is laid for the final type of arrangement which we shall consider here: For describing anything, we learn, its *outline* must be given early, much as a painter blocks in his figures or sky-line before adding detail; and then the details must be arranged in it. This outline may be the shape of harbor or valley, like Stevenson's description of the Bay of Monterey, or it may be the conformation of the land — "fields of wild hill that ran east and south" — or it may most often, in children's

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work, be the sketch outline of a figure; F. Hopkinson Smith has "a thinly constructed military gentleman, all sword and mustache." It should be distinctly noted that this principle demands not a vapory sentence of "general impression," whether at start or finish, but a specific frame to fit details into. Indeed, the whole art of helping children in writing and speaking, as this study urges it, is based on the idea of showing them how to search out and give not general but *specific details*. Thus they may help their readers or hearers to get clear sense-impressions of action or object or whatever is presented, whether as a basis for coming at conclusions or merely as a piece of experience. While, therefore, there can be no objection to the child's adding his impression or opinion where he wants to, I believe that this is not the ideal of stories and descriptions that we should work toward. Further, as would seem to be shown by Miss Vostrowsky's brief study already referred to,¹ it is probable that the child will most often omit them, in this narrative-description type especially, if he is simply encouraged to tell what he perceives. A child's vigorous account of happenings he has seen, given naturally out of class,

¹ Barnes's *Studies in Education*, vol. 1, p. 15.

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may well be contrasted with the strings of generalization which are sometimes accepted as themes in grades and high school.

But the child's visual details in stories and the like remain for a long time only fugitive and brief; we will best, I think, come to longer problems of arrangement of details in space very late, though their use in numerous geography topics, like accounts of harbors and river valleys, may secure their introduction possibly in grade seven or eight. It has been suggested before¹ that ideas which can be handled better in some other medium, like drawing and modeling, had better not be forced into speech or writing. When the need does come for studies requiring space arrangement, whether in geography or other problems, it seems best that the themes called for be distinctly shorter than is usually expected — perhaps five or six sentences only at first. There appears to be no question whatever that we have badly overworked this type, quite out of proportion to its presence and usefulness in talking and writing outside the classroom; a concrete detail or two selected to really individualize is most effective in describing.

¹ See chap. I, p. 5.

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Details given in arrangement in space

When such a problem has been attacked by working first on the outline to be sketched in, we may next help children in arranging their details in the outline. The plan they adopt may be any one that shows the relation of their points in space; connectives are helpful here. The sole requirement is that they do not jump about, aimless and flea-like, in presenting what they have seen. In describing the harbor, they may begin at the breakwater and proceed by the channel to the slips, for instance. Only simple, practical subjects like this are worth attempting. The child must first develop a definite and workable order of details for his account and be able to present his oral or written theme so that he can get the criticism of the class on its actual effect.

The prevision of most of the small problems the children handle can best be completed by the single plan sentence already discussed: "My story tells about the blacksmith's anvil and forge, then how he shapes and fits the shoe, and then how he nails it on," for instance. Whether this appears in the actual theme or not

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— there is no need for it in most cases — it is the conclusion and test of prevision.

The danger of methodizing organization study

Such a discussion as this of specific ways of grouping and arranging details is likely to be misleading: the impression is almost inevitable that one way or another is certainly valid always for meeting a given sort of problem. On the contrary, though for certain cases, like explanation of a game, usually only one way is quite practicable, what will work best in most cases is a combination of methods, and any possible approach is good according to the actual clearness and interest it produces in practice. For example, a visualization succeeds directly in the degree that it shows skill in its combination of (1) the principle of giving the outline early and the other details in space order with (2) the method of putting the vivid first and the significant last for emphasis. The procedure in a social class may then consist first of discussing various ways of handling a given composition problem. The result of such discussion should be to determine which methods are best, by testing their effect in actual oral or written themes and criticizing fairly and keenly. All

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this is to be conditioned by the knowledge that there are really a great many possible ways of arranging the materials of almost any complex problem.

Each stage of developing ability in thinking is thus the child's social experimentation in carrying out actual projects to the best of his ability. From his partial success he must learn to do better through his fellows' judgment of his performance.

THE USE OF CONNECTIVES

We may consider briefly the problem of connecting the parts of topic or theme. Wherever a new idea comes in — whether it is a reason, an example, or an added point or incident of any kind — we must make sure that the reader knows its precise relation. Even if it is but the subordinate part of a sentence, we try to obviate an instant's doubt. This is as useful as guide-posts at turnings in strange country, or, as a recent writer says, as the lamp-posts with street-signs upon them in the city.¹ Children's attempts to work out this problem in high school are bunglesome enough at first, but lessons on the great variety of possible connectives and

¹ Rice, *College and the Future*, p. 34.

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numberless exercises will reinforce the class demand that a pupil not only think but express his idea of the relative meaning and importance of his points. Only from years of practice can one learn to make transitions that are unmistakable, but neither raw nor baldly repetitious. We may be content, in grade and high-school work, to leave the art to "follow how it can." It is only in narrative and descriptive forms that the need of artistry outweighs that of specific clearness, and even here it is a matter which we probably cannot work at bludgeonly with prescription and correction.

We have seen in the course of this chapter how the growth of children's power both of grouping and of ordering their ideas may be somewhat definitely furthered. The grouping we have for convenience divided into three types: (1) the small, simple unit; (2) the massing of two or more units or topics like the first; and (3) the grouping of ideas or topics about an interpretive sentence. Such grouping, it has been urged, is the fundamental and essentially first process of organization. When children can really handle simple units of the first and third types, and can further select ideas of a larger experi-

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ance and throw them into a few groups as in the second type, they are capable of mastering in practical fashion most problems of organizing their own ideas.

There follow the methods of arrangement for clearness and force. Besides the preponderant and most useful and natural (1) time order, there is required for vigor (2) the emphasis principle of putting striking ideas at the beginning, but most significant ones at the end. For making explanations clear, it is essential to discover and use the various principles of (3) putting basic things first — either what is fundamental like the apparatus and purpose of game or process, or what is known or simple for the reader. Finally, for problems of visual observation we need to use the arrangement of (4) putting the outline first and fitting the details in space relation into it.

As to children's actual method of work in solving organization problems, it is likely that there are many good individual methods, but none to be assigned in general. Some may really do best to write first in mad and scrabbled haste, for themselves only, and then revise, and thus clear their thoughts before they attempt talk or writing for any one else; these need to

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remember that a thing written, as Stevenson puts it, "more than half convinces" us that it is adequately expressed, and that we sometimes have to fight free of its particular wording. Most people, probably, do better to make lists of points, cast out and add, and draft at least a rough grouping before writing connectedly at all. This has the double advantage of making reasonably sure of the organization and sometimes also smoothing the way with a felicitous expression noted down. The only point that we can make arbitrarily for every pupil is that competent grouping and arrangement — whether mental, oral, or written — is absolutely requisite to speaking or writing that is of value for communication. The main lines of organization as suggested in this chapter are intended to represent the sort of thinking one must do in meeting typical problems.

If the treatment of organization thus given has seemed like a formulizing which would go far in the ancient ways of stifling children's interest and individuality in expression, we may need to remember that we have attempted reviewing briefly a course of development that runs through all the elementary and high-school years and that is, of course, far from accomplished then.

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The principles here derived, above all, are not intended for prescription and memorization, but should be come at by experiment, criticism, and discussion; if they are then formulated, it should generally be in the children's own way. Organization power is here presented as a matter of increasing skill in dealing with every sort of problem in real expression. The mode of growth suggested is by the socialization of children's thinking through the criticism of a coöperative audience.

IV

EVOLUTION AND ATTAINMENT OF EXPRESSIONAL STANDARDS

Respect the child, respect him to the end, but also respect yourself. . . . You are trying to make that man another *you*. One's enough.

EMERSON, *Education*.

A. MINIMUM FORM-ESSENTIALS AND THEIR ESTABLISHMENT

WE have attempted to gain some view of the best means for building a social group of children interested in expression because they wish to achieve common ends, and of the ways in which such a group may help children in organizing the ideas they have to express. But this essential prevision is, of course, only one phase of the expressional problem. There remains to be considered the more generally discussed and probably far more difficult problem: How may we best work toward more true and artistic expression of the individualities and experiences of children? As has been suggested, the motive force which we shall attempt to use here also is the coöperative effort of the group to work out in common projects requiring effective expression.

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TWO LARGE TYPES OF EXPRESSIONAL DIFFICULTIES

We shall attempt to discover a successful mode of campaign against these difficulties first by grouping them into two distinct classes: ¹

A. What we may by correction brand as socially acceptable or unacceptable forms — positively right or wrong.

B. What we may better criticize as simply more or less clear and forcible and pleasing ways of expression.

It is obviously impossible to decide exactly what forms are so far displeasing as to deserve proscription and what may just escape it. And yet I believe it can be shown that certain necessary, largely arbitrary forms of speaking and writing can be best established through sharp and unremitting attention to them *as the acceptable forms* till they are quite fixed in habitual and almost unconscious reaction, whereas other matters quite as essential can be better attended to in other ways.

FOUR SORTS OF ARBITRARY FORM-CONVENTIONS

By way, then, of attempting a practicable division, it seems convenient to put into the first

¹ The importance of this division was first suggested to me by Miss Edith White, of the Milwaukee State Normal School.

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class (A) four types of form-conventions to be established as habits: (1) Grammatical forms may be taken to include all essential inflections and distinctions between parts of speech, together with such idioms as the proper expression of the negative. If these are essential, they must be drilled thoroughly into habit; for it seems to be in no other way than as unconscious reactions that such forms serve any very useful purpose, in speech at least. They extend from exclusively arbitrary ones, like *you were*, — the specific form having no more reason than has a starched collar, — to those like *lie* and *lay* which demand some logical discrimination of the idea and sorting out of right forms from a mixed mass. But all are alike classed here as *forms* because of the need and the possibility that they may, if rightly handled, be reduced to unconscious habit.

The same thing is true of (2) punctuation. The correct forms for quotations and for end-punctuation of sentences may be learned simply by drilling them in — a “brutal act of memory.” The marking-off of non-restrictive phrases and clause modifiers, to be sure, often involves such close discriminations of idea that it never, perhaps, becomes unconscious habit. But in the

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measure that it is possible, as it certainly seems desirable, for necessary punctuation principles to become practically automatic, they are to be considered in the list of forms. The same is obviously true of (3) essentials in spelling and pronunciation. There remain in this category of forms (4) certain further courtesies of speech and writing, such as decent posture and address, good appearance of manuscript, clear-cut enunciation, and avoidance of positive vulgarity in expression like coarse slang and *argot*.

That the list of forms thus presented contains matters distinctly important to effective and therefore socially good expression is sufficiently apparent. To attempt without knowledge and heed of them to "play the showman" to one's possessions courts inevitable failure, because the attention of the spectators is unfortunately diverted to the uncouth dress of the puppets or to the ungainly puppet-master.

THE QUESTION OF MINIMUM ESSENTIALS

As we look at this problem of achieving acceptable forms, its complexity sometimes seems fearful and hopeless. Perhaps for this very reason, the method of attack has too often been a mad haste to cover all points at once; that is, we

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have given attention in every school year to each in turn of almost numberless matters. As a result, schools and teachers are everlastingly being charged with failing in just the essentials that we are considering. And, indeed, any lapse in these matters is so evident as to call sharp and immediate attention. The retort of most teachers, too, has been upon those of classes below them. Yet there appears to have been small lack of conscientious earnestness all along the course. Consequently, it appears that many teachers are coming pretty rapidly to doubt the efficacy of the daily and hourly correction of all errors — the patient marking with red ink and revising, the persistent, wearisome checking and recasting of children's statements — which have been the regular order of the English teacher's day. If we do honestly question the method we have faithfully tried, if we wonder whether, in face of the forces against us, we have not been attempting too much in the matter of acceptable forms, is it not worth while at least to examine the ground which it is altogether imperative that we cover, and try to fix the corresponding amount which we can really expect to achieve adequately, thoroughly, and finally?

Recent investigations have seemed to throw

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some rays of hope into this dark district and to offer the chance of a clearer view. For example, the investigators of children's speech errors in the Boisé, Idaho, schools discovered that ten per cent of the total came from mistakes in the principal parts of only four verbs — *do*, *come*, *see*, and *go*.¹ This, though it may not be wholly typical, seems to indicate the kind of help such form investigations may give us. Dr. Klapper, indeed, believes that the gross habitual speech errors of children, which the elementary school needs to eliminate, in all number but about thirty to thirty-six.² Similarly, Dr. Charters's³ investigation in Kansas City demonstrated that nearly half the errors in written work there (forty-six per cent) arose from various forms of failing to recognize and indicate sentences; thirty per cent came from omission of periods.⁴ Various studies have done a similar service for

¹ Earhart and Small: "English in the Elementary School," *Elementary School Journal*, vol. xvi, p. 32.

² *Teaching of English*, p. 32.

³ Charters and Miller, *A Course of Study in Grammar based on Investigations in the Kansas City, Missouri, Public Schools*, Table B. Bulletin, January, 1915, Education Series 9. Published by the University of Missouri, Columbia.

⁴ It should be noted, however, that these figures represent written work from the second grade on, and are not distributed.

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spelling. There seems to be need in every considerable school system for thoroughgoing and expert study of these problems of forms to determine their boundaries and area; but enough has been done, apparently, to show the general topography and to suggest that attention rightly given to a few regions will make the whole less rugged and impenetrable-looking.

Decision as to what is really essential in these fields is of course impossible to reach finally without further most careful investigations. The *Study of Language Sensibility*, by Professor Joseph Jastrow, — to be published shortly, — promises to reveal most as to the judgments of cultivated people on certain forms usually condemned wholesale and without discrimination of relative objectionableness. It is a pleasing and hopeful thing that classifications of errors in the making of courses are now generally made in the light of broader knowledge of what is acceptable English usage to-day — in knowledge, at least, of what the makers of dictionaries have concluded to be actually national and reputable present usage — and are not based on only the dogmatic fiat of purists. It begins to look as if an enormous lot of forms that we have insisted on may not actually be worth the tre-

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mendous effort of proscription and correction. Dr. Reynolds, for example,¹ suggests that many which we have rigorously attended to — comprising, he thinks, fully one half of the bulk of most rhetorics — are actually questions of divided usage and should be let alone; and that still other forms we have painfully inculcated — like the quotation within a quotation — are really valueless to the children who try to learn them.

MINIMUM FORM ESSENTIALS FOR EACH SCHOOL YEAR

A specific, if merely tentative, determination seems necessary, before we approach the problem of how to accomplish our aims here, as to the forms which are necessary and attainable for each particular grade group or school year. The result we should undoubtedly aim at is such thorough establishment of the essential forms that they will function in the street, at home — everywhere the child has occasion to speak or write. That is to say, we should aim at one hundred per cent accomplishment of a few things rather than “a namby-pamby achievement of about seventy-five per cent”

¹ “For Minimum Standards in English,” *English Journal*, June, 1915 (vol. iv, p. 349).

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in a more complex problem.¹ We know how seldom such full accomplishment as this is reached even with regard to the most obviously fundamental matters; we realize also that we have against us, in many cases, the whole force of home and neighborhood heedlessness and ignorance. How are we to reach our aim?

If our method is to effect such thorough fixation of the right form in habit that the correct reaction will quite supplant the incorrect, it seems obvious that we cannot attack so many mistakes at once as we have done. We have apparently failed oftenest because we have let our conscientiousness prescribe such a host of corrections that the child is unable even to remember them. While he is attending to one, trying hard to get that quite established, other mistakes naturally creep in. Now, we are tempted to draw his attention to these, with the result that he breaks the chain of habit formation he has begun and fails to remember the first point. "Thus we actually keep him at work on a problem that is too complex for him — that has more items than his span of attention can possibly embrace. We keep him fluttering, and he cannot settle down enough to learn anything. It

¹ Cf. Reynolds, "Minimum Standards," *op. cit.*

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is all a haze to him — in some cases, a gruesome darkness.”¹ Dr. Klapper insists that not above three to six specific bad habits of grammar and idiom can be thoroughly eradicated in each school year, in average classes.² And if we are to take as our standard *full attainment* of each correct form we attempt, we must decide to settle upon a definitely minimal standard probably no more numerous than these. It is reasonably certain that success here depends almost wholly on the teacher’s willingness to pass by not only a host of minor mistakes and infelicities of expression, but even for some time a large part of the positive and very bad errors the children are guilty of. For it is evident that we must concentrate our force on one point, or very small and closely related group of points, for a far longer time than we generally do at present, instead of attacking several at once, diffusing attention, and confusing our pupils.

TENTATIVE SKETCHING OF A MINIMAL LIST BY GRADE GROUPS

It is clear that such definite standards can be best set only by each school or school system for its own use. Once they are set, it should be

¹ Dr. E. O. Finkenbinder.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 33.

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demanding that every child promoted to a given grade have complete mastery of the essential forms for the grade he is leaving, or be so specifically conditioned that his next teacher may know precisely where to go to work. If the standard is to be so rigorous, it must of course be absolutely minimal. Merely as a trial sketch, quite tentative, and based as yet on no thorough investigation, I may be permitted to suggest the following minimal form conventions. The list is presented here with the idea that it might be used as a basis for study and experimentation in specific schools and fundamentally revised to meet the test of use. Each school system must no doubt incorporate local mistakes; however, it will probably be best not to increase the list, but to make compensatory reductions, since what is here given is supposed to represent the amount that can be done thoroughly in normal time and conditions.

(1) *Grammar and idiom*

In the matter of grammar, the most flagrant errors may be attacked first. Those which have logical or other discriminations at the root of them, like the *lie* and *lay* or *shall* and *will* distinctions and those between adjective and adverb,

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can be worked with systematically only late in the course;¹ but this does not mean that certain specific idioms cannot well be noted early as correct, and drilled in. The method proposed for most of the elementary-school study of these matters, indeed, is that type forms of this sort be drilled into habit to serve as standards for reference — something like Matthew Arnold's touchstones of poetry. It is of course meant that of the list determined on for any grade group, the forms should be divided among the teachers so that each is responsible for only the three to five forms of his own list.

We may suggest quite tentatively, then, as minima in grammar and idiom: (a) for grades one to three, *I did*, *I saw*, and *have seen*, *I lay*, *I came*, *I have n't any*, *you were*, *I have gone*; (b) for grades four to six, *he said* (past tense), *I was*

¹ The minimum of essentials in formal grammar (Cf. (1) and (2) below and pp. 156-67) should probably include recognition: (1) of the sentence; (2) of the parts of speech; (3) of clauses as distinct from phrases, and the chief uses of both; (4) of the distinction between main and subordinate propositions; (5) of complete verbs; transitive verbs (voice) and linking verbs, with objects and predicate attributes; tense.

It is intended that simply these points be thoroughly understood, always by the test of *use in the sentence*, and without any refinements of subclassification whatever. It should be possible to complete in grades eight and nine.

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lying down, he does n't, an apple, may I?, with you and me, do as I do, looks like me, let it go, he plays well, and there were three chairs; (c) for grades seven to nine, *if I were you and if I had been, I wish he had been, if he should come, shall we go?, the scenery in these places is beautiful;* the principal parts of nine or ten more verbs;¹ agreement of pronouns with *everybody, a person,* etc. For the later high school—if only some thirty-six forms have been fully attended to—there should remain little of this sort of thing besides the further needful systematizing of points previously mastered.

(2) *Punctuation*

In the matter of punctuation, since realization of the sentence unit causes such enormous trouble (forty-six per cent in the Charters study), it seems reasonable to suggest that this receive constant and perhaps exclusive attention till it is mastered, perhaps till the end of grade six.² However, since quotations and the word of address are natural to use in writing much earlier, that topic also may, perhaps, be threshed through

¹ Cf. the Boisé List.

² Cf. *Speaking and Writing English* (Lawrence, Mass., 1915), by Superintendent Bernard M. Sheridan, pp. 14-17 and 93.

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in its very simplest form. When the sentence is realized and punctuated always as a unit, we may attend to its interior punctuation; probably by the end of the eighth school year we should have completed: (1) the series; (2) grammatically independent words and phrases; (3) the compound sentence with a conjunction. Probably main statements unconnected grammatically had better be thrown into separate sentences at this stage. The children will have noted the semicolon in their reading and should learn its value; but though some of them may use it with more or less success, it is probable that its formal teaching should come later. The growing use of subordinate clauses in these grades usually creates the added difficulty of their mispunctuation as sentences, and this battle must be firmly fought. Possibly in the ninth year we may begin considering the semicolon in its sole important use for high-school pupils — to show closer relation than pointing in separate sentences, for statements not joined by a conjunction. Obviously, real mastery of each of these points requires first a grasp of a simple grammatical principle underlying, and it is necessary in approaching each to develop a thorough, practical understanding of this principle.

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For the last three years of high school there remains the really difficult matter of fixing in habit the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers, whether phrase or clause — adjective, adverbial, or appositional. The right marking of appositives is a part of this difficulty, and should, I believe, hardly be attempted much before this point. Punctuating the adverbial clause before the subject belongs here also. The careful study of punctuation in high school should consist in helping pupils to apply in numberless cases the principles they have already learned. If a pupil has mastered the five or six points here listed, he will probably be able to punctuate clearly and adequately; other matters of finesse, I am convinced, can very wisely wait for his college study of composition, in case he ever attempts to use the subject as an avenue to literary activities.

(3) *Spelling and pronunciation*

Spelling words can well be selected from the children's own writing, checked by the lists of Dr. Ayers and Dr. Jones.¹ If simply the "one hundred demons of the English language" in

¹ L. F. Ayers: *A Scale for the Measurement of English Spelling*, Russell Sage Foundation, 1915; W. F. Jones: *A Concrete Investigation of the Materials of English Spelling*, South Dakota Uni-

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the Jones study could be mastered by the end of grade six, a really immeasurable load would be lifted from the backs of teachers beyond that grade. It need hardly be said that the words given in spelling must not be all that the child understands in reading and may find later use for, but only those that it seems worth while and reasonably certain that he needs in his natural daily life now. If one hundred per cent of efficiency in spelling these can really be fixed as the pupil's ideal, an interested observation of such matters which we will try to induce also must avail to maintain his usage of correct forms beyond the small vocabulary that we can establish irremovably in school spelling lessons. For pronunciation, too, there is need for fixing a small number of right habits, and surely none for wasting time to inculcate the ways of speech of one section — the short *a*'s, for example — in preference to the acceptable, recorded speech of another.

(4) *Further essential courtesies of speech and writing*

Further socially necessary courtesies we may well leave, so far as possible, to the developing

versity, 1913; see also the article on High School Spelling, by Mr. Lester of the Hill School, *English Journal*, vol. v, p. 404.

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taste of the pupils. *The Horace Mann Course in Art, Grade One*, says: "No effort is made to impose a more refined standard [of color] upon the child, for it would not appeal to him."¹ The child who is brought to the point of dawning taste will grow quickly enough away from the raw crudities of his speech and of his environment; but where he is living frankly in the stage of delight in blatant color and scent and rawness of life generally, it will do little good to preach or prescribe more artistic expression in words. This question of taste, also, belongs rightly to the following section.² Yet even in the region of forms, a very few of these matters should probably be settled upon by the consensus of class judgment, guided probably by the teacher's suggestions, and thereafter demanded invariably by the pupils — for instance, a simple, uniform arrangement of theme- or letter-headings, to be developed as we shall see later,³ a decision as to margin and indention, and a like standard in the matter of posture and enunciation in speaking. Likewise, what the class may be able, with the help and suggestion

¹ *Teachers College Elementary School Course*, 1908, page 55.

² Section B, pp. 153 ff.

³ Page 138.

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of their leader, truly to realize as quite undesirable — cheap or smart or the like — may be quietly branded by the common judgment as unacceptable, and really eliminated.

But here again, the teacher or supervisor with a too-tender linguistic conscience may force and demand far too much, with the result that really important points — flagrant violations and essentials of form — go by the board, and nagged, dull, inexpressive children come to be the rule. Whatever may be a teacher's personal attitude toward expressions rightly listed as colloquial, for example, — even though he may prefer for his own use on every occasion the precise formalities of literary expression,¹ — it seems clear that he has no right in grades and in high school to proscribe and grub diligently out the good colloquialisms in the everyday written and oral themes of his pupils. The question appears to turn on whether we wish in these grade and high-school years to cultivate excellent homely expression to fit the daily, informal occasions that we all have to meet most

¹ On this point, see the section, "Schoolmasters' English," on p. 309 of *The Teaching of English* by Carpenter, Baker, and Scott; also the chapter on "Schoolmastering the Language," in Lounsbury's *The Standard of English Usage*.

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often, or a rather bookish and formal type exclusively. But by colloquial usage I of course do not mean vulgarism or barbarism or dialect of any sort; I mean good colloquialism. And, indeed, it would not probably be necessary to urge this point at all if it were not that colloquialism appears to be very commonly regarded, even by the makers of studies and courses, as a random collection of all sorts of mistakes not otherwise classified. Thus, in recent courses one finds *like I do* and *he don't* side by side with such expressions, equally reprehensible, apparently, and alike proscribed, as *lots of* and *quite a few* and *go slow* and *company for [sic] dinner*. This seems truly unfortunate, since it means condemnation of whatever is correctly rated colloquial and is thus in really good standing, and results in its prompt eradication so far as courses and teachers can avail against it. The question of how to work at the proper time for a desirable establishment of power in formal and literary expression is discussed later.¹ Certainly we desire that children's talk and writing should be always couched in reasonably acceptable forms; it should be decent in tone and socially pleasing; but it should not be judged by

¹ See pp. 179 ff.

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a standard that is ideal in so many respects that it is unattainable in any.

We have noted a merely tentative list of the form essentials that should be achieved before any other matters of *form* are attempted in given school years or groups of grades. In average classes, this division of composition study should probably take but a small part of each year's language time. In districts where there is excellent home speech, comparatively little of this should be needed — sometimes practically none on matters of grammar and idiom. In districts of foreign speech or especially bad English, on the contrary, these same points may take most if not all the time that can reasonably be given to achieving standards of good form in expression. It has been suggested that the conscientious teacher will gain greatly — in particular will have a more useful, complete view of the difficulties he has to contend against and will realize what he can and cannot possibly do — if he keeps under each child's name a list of his flagrant mistakes which it seems imperative to eradicate. Where actual need of forms is found in expressing interesting experiences and discussing common problems, it can be hoped that correction of forms, organized as

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here suggested, in any school district, might result in a few habits functioning automatically, not only in but also out of school. The major time and attention should certainly be left for the suggestive criticism which may help to elevate the class standards of clearness and positive effect in thought and speech and writing.¹

Treatment of flagrant violations listed for later study

But before we take up the actual method for establishing the forms thus listed, it is well to attempt answering a sincere question as to the practicability of what we have discussed. Some teachers will doubtless ask with concern: "But what about the many positively wrong forms — even flagrantly bad habits of speech — which do not appear either in the list of requirements for a given year or in that for supposed earlier attainment? Will not these fix themselves immovably in habit?" It may, indeed, happen that these do get more firmly fixed, though we may perhaps console ourselves with the reflection that, after all, children's habits are pretty green and plastic if properly handled. However we answer, the fact certainly remains that

¹ See pp. 153 ff.

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we can deal in effective, permanent fashion — gaining real results in habits — with but a few points of form in a given year, and that at least till we have our minima perfectly achieved, we had better work away on those only. And again, much ignorance and crudeness, at least in primary children's expression, will be presently outgrown anyway.

It should, no doubt, be added that flagrant mistakes that are found in the minimal list for a given school, but are not up for correction or review in that year, — *if I had been there*, for example, or the punctuation of non-restrictive elements, — may sometimes be quietly corrected, usually by the substitution of the right form on a pupil's paper or in his speech. I have an idea, indeed, that this will be more effective in satisfying the teacher's scruples than in doing much to establish the desired form in the children's habits. And the method must certainly be used sparingly, with tremendous inhibition of the impulse to tamper, if it is not to become a painful agent of stultification. We have a difficult way to steer between such correction as maims and kills the children's joy in expression, on the one hand, and ineffectual, unchecked, and unguided babble, on the other. I

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have suggested that the surest way of helping individual teachers is most likely to be by holding strictly to the attainment of a few minimum requirements. Certainly we have a right to demand in addition such common-sense, stern inhibition of conscientiousness as shall leave complete and vigorous, not uproot and kill, the pupils' eager delight in talking and writing in the social classroom. And the psychologist nowadays suggests that *calling attention to a form before we are ready to give full, unremitting attention to its establishment can probably have no other result than confusion and repression.*

TWO STAGES IN ESTABLISHING ESSENTIAL FORMS

There remain to be considered the means by which minimal form essentials, once agreed upon for a given grade or school, can be best handled for their complete establishment in habit. For a successful attack we may conveniently note two stages: first, the child's realization of the need and usefulness of the *right* way for gaining his ends; and second, his thorough mastery of the form — its establishment, so far as possible, in his unconscious habit. The force which we shall find most effective in both these processes is the

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children's eager desire for effective communication of what is in them, corrected by the class demand for what they all agree to be socially acceptable, as a reasonable courtesy which each speaker must show if he wants to be heard.

(1) Realization of the correct form and of its value

Since the matters of form which we are here considering are for the most part quite arbitrary conventions, at least to the children's view, and most of them altogether unknown to the majority or to all the class, and since violations are so common as often to constitute the rule of practice, much preparation is generally necessary before the class as critics can take charge of demanding any one of these forms in the speech and writing of the group members. For the first step — often realization of habitual use of a wrong form and always of the true usefulness of a particular right one — we may attempt to reproduce in class the conditions which probably gave rise to the convention we are aiming to establish, and by suggestion help the children to discover the one that represents correct usage.

For example, we may let the children themselves decide whether they wish to permit slouch-

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ing and mumbling in those who speak before the class, or to demand good posture, forthright address, and clear enunciation. This end may be largely secured by praise of excellent manner, but probably it will require also condemnation of what is bad or unsocial. Similarly in regard to headings and margins: those who have tried both methods need not be reminded how far more effective than rule-of-thumb prescription in these matters is giving the children freedom to experiment — as they do in drawing, for example — to see what placing of work on their papers and what form of heading looks best. When the class have made experiments, they may compare their own with better work and perhaps vote on what form is most pleasing — if necessary, guided by the teacher's suggestion. Thereafter they should be encouraged to demand observance of that form in all cases as a requisite social decency.

In matters of punctuation a somewhat like judgment may be secured. We may let the child in the primary grades, for instance, try to read aloud what he has written at dictation, or, better, as was suggested before,¹ let some other child read each one's story aloud. The pupil

¹ See pp. 56-57.

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who has written eagerly of his experiences wants his story appreciated. But from the inevitable hesitations and stumblings of his reader, he may come to realize the failure of what he has done to secure its effect of immediate comprehension. As another aid, the teacher may write a story on the board at the children's dictation and ask them for the marks that will make it easiest to read. In all these cases the children will probably look in their books to note the forms they have already understood, but have not yet discovered as essential to their own uses. A like procedure is possible in the upper grades and high school — the discovery of a new punctuation form, for instance, through the failure of a reader to get the exact meaning intended. Where a pupil here has tried earnestly to express ideas requiring somewhat more complex marking than he is used to, it may need only the honest puzzlement of another child to emphasize the need of looking up and using certain forms.

The case with spelling, pronunciation, and correct grammar is rather different because need can hardly be shown so evidently there. Probably the best beginning is to encourage the children in being fully alive to new forms in what

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they read and hear and in discussing these in class. Thus, when we find *Who's been lying in my bed?* in *The Three Bears* we may label this as the *right* form, and sharply contrast it with the wrong one that some of the children may use in telling the story. The idea must be made quite clear that only this right form is acceptable. Most forms of this sort are so altogether arbitrary — and often, as in the case of spelling, so unreasonable — that no discussion is generally possible save “We say it this way.” Some degree of satisfaction in following conventions, or more often the discomfort following their breach, is apparently the only force we can invoke here.

(2) *The fixing of essential forms in habit*

Of course, in all these cases the child's realization that he has need of some sort for a given form is but a very short step in the way of its establishment in his everyday use. It is an initial incentive along the way; but this is a hard and tedious travel at the best — really almost endless; and realization of need will rarely be so sharp as to prick most grade-school children, at any rate, very far along it. What must be accomplished is, of course, the training of hands or speech centers, usually with the breaking-down

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of wrong connections, to do what the child has come to see is worth doing — an affair of unending repetitions where must be no shirking of the hard, steady pull, no suffering of exceptions to occur. But we may at the outset note the waste of relying upon sheer repetition. When dogged determination, on the child's own part or that of his teacher, keeps him at his task, such a quantity of good energy is used in forcing the process forward, or in resisting it, that too little apparently is given really to make the form a part of the child himself. It is wasteful, graceless grind. And then, in number of repetitions the stimulating environment of the home and the street has us at a thousand disadvantages.

MOTIVATION OF DRILL LESSONS

If we are to insure the highest measure of success, then, we must follow Dr. McMurry's dictum: "Drills must be made sharp by the presence of motive."¹ How are we to supply the necessary living motive? Means of drill are as plenty as blackberries: transcription, dictation, filling blanks, learning grammatical names and principles, and so on. Doubtless these are all more or less valid means of habit formation

¹ *How to Study*, p. 191.

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— more, it appears, in proportion as the drills themselves have reasons or motives that appeal to the child as worth while or interesting. But it is probable that the most effective means we shall find will be those in which the child's pride and interest in what he has to express and in doing the thing well is reinforced by the class demand and the needs of a social situation.

In the matter of manuscript form, for instance, if a child copies from the board the composite class story that was suggested above,¹ because it is in part his own and worth preserving and perhaps showing his admiring friends at home, he has a motive for doing the thing in the best possible form. Under the stimulus of such a need for good results, the forms of manuscript headings and margins which the class choose to adopt and require may simply be copied by each child from a model on the board, and then tried in the writing of individual themes, until the desirable form becomes habitual. Similarly, effective and appealing subject-matter gives force to the suggestion that it be copied or written at dictation and preserved for a real purpose. All such writing will of course have to be excellent in its form, and thus will help

¹ See p. 139.

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to establish necessary habits. It is hardly a good plan to break in upon the budding impulse to expression with a demand, during assignments, that certain forms be held in mind. An unusual and horrible example was furnished me by one fourth-grade teacher who discoursed and questioned for ten minutes on details of heading and indentation and then baldly announced the theme subject. But where it is given in friendly and courteous fashion, the caution to the overimpulsive that they take plenty of time to see just what they are about before they start to work, seems to be frequently in order and useful.

For establishing right grammatical forms, motivated repetition may again be the best key. In all the school years, but particularly in the early ones, story-telling and dramatization may have, among other delectable values, that of fixing correct forms the author has used, — for instance, the correct verb phrases in *The Three Bears*, already noted. Such live dramatization and games as are suggested for learning *I have n't any*, in *Speaking and Writing*,¹ can usually be repeated indefinitely; they suggest many possible variations to both teachers and pupils, and they are most likely to hold absorbed attention

¹ Maxwell, Johnston, Barnum, Book 1, pp. 1-5.

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throughout. Indeed, there seems to be every reason to trust the effectiveness of good live games that appeal to the children, for drilling on this sort of forms. In the higher grades these may often be made into team competitions of one sort or another. Once the right forms are used freely in play, it seems reasonable to suppose that they are most likely to crop out spontaneously outside the schoolroom. Again, if a child learns by heart verses from the poems he studies because he is eager to recite them at home or at a school assembly, his work need be no stupid grind, but a vigorous and cheerful giving of sturdy attention.

In the six high-school years, of course, there appears need to replace these adventitious interests so far as possible by realization of the value and meaning of specific conventions. Here, through the study of so much formal grammar as can be made to function unmistakably in his work day by day, a child may come to see as much reason as can be found back of the arbitrary forms which he must memorize and apply. Here too we may succeed in making the steady pull of achieving correct forms a process of persistent fighting by each child for ground he needs in important operations projected by

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him and his classmates. Given living realization of the use to which he can put a particular idiom — the exact meaning of *if he was right about this*, or *even if he had said that*, to fit the facts of a situation — it seems clear that any sort of quick and vivid drill may be successful — repeated as many times as necessary, and made effective by brevity and good spirit and sharp centering on *only one point* to be mastered.

Punctuation seems likely to yield to no other attack than this of unceasingly applying each principle to numberless specific cases. No particular urge seems possible except perhaps that of appealing subject-matter in the examples used — best, doubtless, from the pupils' own writing — and the constant pressure of realization that forms, if they are to be useful, must be got right and unquestionably mastered. For perhaps the most difficult problem in this region — that of establishing a sentence sense — Superintendent Sheridan ¹ notes the value of mastering the idea fully in speech first. Encouragement of the habit of marking the sentence end by dropping the voice and pausing, without any interruption of *and-a* and the like, appears to be one of the early essentials for teaching oral

¹ *Speaking and Writing English*, pp. 14-17. Lawrence, Mass.

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composition. It may perhaps be achieved best by suggestion of ease and deliberateness in talking in the social classroom. It must then be discovered as essential to written work also and unremittingly applied there, with no avoidable introduction, meanwhile, of other rules of pointing.

In the use of all these means for establishing necessary form-conventions there is need of the teacher's greatest resourcefulness. The children themselves, if they are alive to the problem, may often present new and valid ideas for work and study, and these are likely to be most useful; but the teacher must always be ready beforehand with his own attack. And it must be brief, but come day after day, and often several times a day, *on the same form* or small group of forms, not rapidly scatter attention over three or four different points. A good deal has been done toward collecting helpful suggestions of this sort; but it is after all the ingenuity and the pleasant spirit of the teacher heartily aiding the class at their problem that are most important here.

USE OF FORMS IN MEETING FURTHER REAL PROBLEMS

The one best way of establishing a form permanently — once it is so far initiated in this fashion

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that the children feel little uncertainty about it — is, I believe, to suggest to the children real problems of expressing their own ideas which require the particular convention for their best accomplishment. These will best be projects such as grow naturally from the children's real interests. Thus, study and drill on punctuating quotations may naturally be followed by problems of stories requiring dialogue or of dramatizing parts of stories. Accounts of people's characteristic ways, for example, of course demand that we hear what they say. Here, then, are two different sorts of quotation form, for dramatic scenes and for stories, including almost numberless problems. Since the forms in question have had attention freely and recently called to them, the pride of the child in his own work may first be enlisted for thorough proof-reading,¹ and, once he has accomplished this to the best of his ability, the pride of the class may next be called on for checking up his work. We should, however, see to it even then that the child himself corrects his mistakes unaided if he possibly can do so.

¹ See chap. III, p. 56.

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ENLISTING COÖPERATION ON SPECIFIC FORM MATTERS

It is probable that the usefulness of this type of work could be enormously increased if the parents of each child, and in departmental work, certainly, every one of his teachers, were to receive a card stating the form matter which the class was just then working to establish, and probably those also which were supposedly fixed in habit already, and asking that these specific points receive attention outside the English classroom also. Of course this would have to be skillfully maneuvered. But where the list was very brief and definite, help from many parents and from all other teachers should be possible to secure.¹ In any case, it should certainly be possible, once we make the list of matters to be achieved each year really one of a few minimum essentials, and not a numberless confusing array, actually to fix them in habit in the course of a school year without diverting necessary interest and attention from what is the true

¹ The most valuable chapter in that interesting book, Professor R. W. Brown's *How the French Boy Learns to Write*, appears to me to be his discussion of "Organized Language Tradition" (chap. VIII).

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central purpose of composition, the individual organization and statement of experience.

THE TIME NECESSARY FOR FIXING AN ESSENTIAL FORM

The length of time that we must spend on concentrated attention to any form is not difficult to determine. Unswerving fixation on each specific point should probably continue till every pupil in the class either never uses the wrong form even in free and heated discussion, or, if he does, immediately recognizes the mistake without any correction from outside—show of hands or the like. The erring will often be helped sufficiently by a sensation of lowered class temperature, so sharp that even the least sensitive cannot escape it. The class themselves, that is, will have come to demand the newly acquired correct form, and will ruthlessly proscribe as inexcusable all ignorance or heedlessness. So, until, one by one, each of the small list of forms drilled upon and required in each grade is so fully fixed, we should encourage the children in their criticism to make ruthless demands. The device recently suggested in the *English Journal*,¹ of having all children look for

¹ Pauline Cope, "Round Table," February, 1916 (vol. v, p. 134).

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such violations by any member of the group anywhere and report complete statements and names, and then of deputing committees to write out all such reports on the blackboard each week, should be successful in proportion as few and specific points are looked for. Upon this taking over by the group of standards discovered to be correct and essential, the teaching of composition may most surely rely for their thorough establishment. It is no doubt obvious how very few form matters in any school year can be really brought to the point of complete absorption into the class consciousness and into the habitual reactions of each child. But I venture to insist that no other result is worth much consideration in this problem of essential forms.

The aim of the whole study of forms is intelligent self-correction by every child without the aid of any one else. This should of course apply to both his oral and written form equally. The suggestion ¹ that no correction marks be placed on papers certainly seems reasonable and necessary as regards these matters which we have thus firmly established. Until a child has come first to the point of making his own corrections in proof-reading, and even beyond that,

¹ Cf. chap. III, p. 60.

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to actually checking the mistake before it appears, attention to the form in question has not gone far enough in his case. And I believe that such one hundred per cent attainment in the small list of forms for each year should be demanded of every normal child. Only in this way can each teacher know where to start toward accomplishing his particular share. This may seem almost a policy of blood and iron; but provided the list is limited and specific enough, we need hardly inflict outrage on the originality or spontaneity of any youngster. Its clearness and practical possibility of attainment should make such a standard a salutary influence.

It is sufficiently obvious that some thirty-six errors in grammar and idiom, a very short list of punctuation rules, and a minimum requirement in spelling, form of manuscript and of oral address, and the like are a long way from comprising all the endless list of matters which are daily and hourly corrected in most grades and high schools. And it is, of course, optional with school and teacher to select as minima whatever matters seem fully essential. It is here suggested simply that the choice of such a list be made always in the widest attainable view of what is

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acceptable English to-day and in practical knowledge of what children can actually, fully accomplish in given time and under given conditions. We have canvassed, so far, the *form conventions* which may be regarded as making composition minimally acceptable and which children in average school conditions can actually master. Beyond these of course lies the vast range of matters, certainly quite as important, for suggestive criticism and, through this, gradual development of more clear and forceful and artistic expression. These we shall discuss in the section following. The basis of the division between the two types seems unmistakably useful — that forms and matters of greater effectiveness in expression come from different sources and are unlikely to be achieved by the same treatment. It is only, then, a few conventions necessary to decent social speech and writing, not any more positive attainments, that we have considered in this section (A). It is hoped that the mode of treatment suggested — keeping hard at one thing at a time — may be effectual in getting these matters out of the way with the most swiftness and least pother, so that we can give major attention in composition classes to more positive ideals.

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B. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVENESS IN SENTENCE-BUILDING AND IN WORD CHOICES

Beyond the small region of absolute form requirements already canvassed there is, of course, a long and hard way to travel toward really effective expression. For children's speech and writing, even were it fully correct, is necessarily awkward and inaccurate and rawly crude. It is now redundant, and now gaping for needed words. It has next to no effectiveness in relating ideas, but is infantile either in stringing sentences together or in chopping them short. It is too often crass and cheap and tasteless. All this, of course, is simply saying that a child's tools are very blunt. He sees details keenly, but waveringly — not of course with the sweep and completeness of the trained observer; and his verbal expression naturally lags far behind his ideas.

Reasons for Differentiating

Form conventions and

Modes of positive effectiveness

The commonest tendency in the study of wording and sentence-building in composition

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classes, just as we have seen in the matter of prescribing forms, has been to proceed by deliberate inculcation of more apt and accurate words and more expressive sentence-structure. I believe, however, that the problem of diction and of sentences is so radically different from that of form establishment as to require a radically different method. On the one hand are form conventions requiring full establishment in habit; on the other, principles of more clear and vigorous and beautiful statement, demanding ordered growth in a child's thought-power and appreciations before he can make effective use of them. There are naturally many border forms difficult if not impossible to classify; but the basic distinction seems to be valid and practicable.

As we shall see in considering the development of more effective wording and structure, the child here again makes the discovery — for instance, in regard to the placing of modifiers — that a given way of expression has not had the effect he desired, whether because the thing was not entirely clear or because it was not most forcefully and aptly said. He may have to make this discovery repeatedly, as he has done in using unacceptable forms, before he is roused to see

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that a certain useful principle is essential to his success at this point. Very much as in the study of organization, we may now proceed to help him discover and formulate such principles as he can come at — as of need of specific and apt wording or of clear reference or of more forceful relation of ideas. But unlike the rules of end-punctuation of sentences, for example, the application of any one of the principles so derived appears to require invariably, in the meeting of each particular problem in expression, live and conscious search for the best solution — for the most accurate and vivid word or the strongest construction. In other words, we have to deal here not with exact rules that we can learn to apply automatically, but with wise counsels which we must adapt to the needs of each new situation; and probably no two cases ever respond to precisely the same treatment. It seems clear that none of the matters that remain to be considered can ever become affairs of unconscious spinal reaction or muscle memory, as apparently most form conventions can do. Patient, multitudinous application of each principle is indeed necessary. However, as the aim here is not to fix habits, but to develop rapidity and sureness in dealing with original problems

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of expression, the effective method of work will differ also.

THREE REMAINING TYPES OF EXPRESSIONAL ABILITY

The remaining problems of composition teaching which we shall discuss under this general topic of gaining effectiveness in expression may be conveniently grouped into three types: The first is growth in ability to construct transparently clear and forceful sentences. The second is achievement of accuracy in the choice of words to convey the exact idea. The third is development of true artistry in fitting words and phrases simply and aptly to their purpose. Attainment in all these, it is maintained, must be the expression of increase in both mental keenness of perceiving ideas and relations, and fineness of tact and taste in expressing them.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE THOUGHT- RELATION IN SENTENCES

First as to sentence construction: For setting out in this, we may well wait till the child, with the increasing complexity of his experience, finds need of expressing ideas in more close and accurate relation. In the course of earnest efforts

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to make a point clear, he may presently find that his meaning really has not been grasped, perhaps because his sentence is clumsy or indistinct. Or we may need sometimes to direct the children's attention specifically to such weaknesses in expression as illogical sentence planning or thought-relation, since they may else continue for too long a time to accept very rough equivalents for accuracy and clearness. But here we need most especially to note that it is only as children succeed in grasping and realizing more close and varied relations in thought that they can see the need of increasing their range and power in construction of sentences to express it.

For example, we may take what is perhaps the most important and the least regarded sentence principle, that of accurate relation, whether coördination or subordination of ideas. Most children apparently think chiefly in a stringy fashion, and their method of expression is chiefly a chain of *and* and *so* sentences or chopped-apart simple ones, for a long time after their teachers set to work to check and correct them for it. The result is that arbitrary prescription and correction are too likely to be employed for carrying the point. But once the majority of the pupils can be expected to use complex sen-

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tences freely and naturally and to appreciate the closer relations shown by this type, definite studies in relating thoughts in numerous ways besides the compound type may be made most valuable. I do not of course mean that many children should not or will not use such sentences earlier, but merely that specific class attention to developing the principle will hardly be most useful before this. At the proper time, not, I think, much before the ninth school year, we may help to discover weakness of effect in sentences used by the children themselves, and with this, various specific ways in which thoughts and ideas may be put together in sentences — an essential bit of thorough grammar study.

Then, to help this in functioning in the children's own speaking and writing, useful exercises may be given in sentence-massing — for instance, taking two or three familiar statements in clear relation and combining them in various ways, to show the generally superior effect of the complex form or the simple type with its less important thought expressed in a phrase. In such study it is most essential of all to note the necessity of subordinating the really minor element; this point appears to be often slighted. We may next encourage children to experiment

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freely in the problem and to discover from the class judgment what effect they gain. Above all, we may lead the class to watch for and commend ways which their classmates achieve of constructing strong and clear sentences, or cases in what they read or hear in which the meaning is given unmistakably and with the right impact. Thus, through the untiring study of this principle illustrated by examples from the best work that the children come in contact with and from their own best expression, we may bring them to a point where they criticize keenly, but fairly, cases of stringy or babyishly short sentences, weak coördination with *and* or *so*, and false subordination of important elements. The child thus criticized may try to make his sentence better, or he may call on his critic for help. But it appears to be only through long, patient study and revision of this sort that a child masters any point of sentence structure and makes it thoroughly useful to him.

Principles of effective sentence-structure

Such study as this of sentence-relation, leading to thorough and conscious but, so far as may be, unhampering attention to each matter in the child's everyday speech and writing, is

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needed for handling each of various principles of sentence structure. If only five such principles could be taken up in the grammar grades and high school, each one till it was mastered reasonably for practical use, I believe that children would come out of the study with some real power of thinking and building effective sentences and with a great corresponding gain in ability to see logical relations of ideas. We may consider the necessary points in this order:

- (1) Placing of modifiers and reference of pronouns for unmistakable clearness — begun perhaps in grade six or seven. We may point out to children that matters of this sort, even when they are possible to be understood, are not well handled when there is either real confusion on the reader's part or, worse still, when he turns aside from the ideas to note an awkwardness or a bit of unintended humor — Besant's clumsy "He admonished perpetually the boys to keep still," or "The can-washing was not always done very well by the farmers, so now the dairy washes all of them." These points are generally, I believe, given enough attention in most present courses.
- (2) Effecting clear and strong relation of sentence-elements — already discussed. This includes all that is usually presented under sentence

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unity, and more. It may be stated: Thoughts should be clearly and strongly related, in separate sentences, in parts of a compound sentence, or in subordinate clauses or phrases. As perhaps the chief principle of logical sentence-structure this appears to need the most time, beginning, probably, about grade nine.

- (3) Holding to sentence plan.¹ This means simply knowing what the sentence subject is — what one is talking about — *and remembering*. It avoids, *At the age of six, my grandparents died. He was deaf, due to measles, and An earthquake is when* —, as well as all the troubles traced to loose participles and other verbals. This principle may appear in grade nine or ten.
- (4) Putting in striking places the elements that deserve most emphasis — at the end or the crest of the sentence or out of their normal order; this last appears to be the secret of the force in periodic sentences. Attention to it probably pays little before the second or third year of the high school.
- (5) Building like ideas alike — parallelism of construction; as an especially nice refinement of thinking, this may best receive attention rather later than (4).

These, I believe, are the important principles of sentence-structure — matters distinct enough from the arbitrary rules of case and agreement

¹ Cf. Baldwin, *Writing and Speaking*, p. 4.

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and idiomatic phrasing previously discussed, because they are both discovered and applied in conscious discrimination of thought-relations.

Organizing and limiting the study of sentence-structure

It is, I think, fairly obvious that no mere memorizing and reciting and chance application of these construction principles, one after another, can be expected to do much good. That we do not compass their reasonable mastery in many high-school English courses is probably due most of all to the fact that no one principle is recognized as sufficiently important to merit sole consideration for a long enough time. To be sure, formal recognition of these principles and of particular type-examples can be readily secured in the grades where it has been suggested that they be introduced; and this is commonly enough achieved. The essential mastery, however, of which this is but a preliminary process, means thorough and unremitting practice on each principle. We need to apply each one in numerous exercises in sentence building; and we can make these vigorous and interesting in so far as a child realizes the need of firmer and clearer sentences in his own expression. This is

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not an affair of a few days; it requires rather all winter and even several severe successive winters to fix a single ideal of structure. But, incomplete as our results must be in grades and high school, I believe we shall find that work like this is quite decidedly worth while.

We may note briefly also the due and essential limits to such study. Just as in the correction of form errors, the teacher must take most particular care that neither he nor the class critics are permitted to become heckling and finicking in their criticism and attempts at better sentences. We dare not permit ourselves to forget that children's minds are not adult and mature, that their sentences will almost always be far less exact and finished than we could desire, and that to expect anything else, far less to demand it, is in the highest degree harmful and unprofitable. We may, for instance, find constant temptation to work toward niceties of parallel structure in grades where it is probable that the pupils are not ready for so precise a form; it is doubtful if many of them even of high-school age can handle it at all. It is too easy, also, to become over-careful and higgling about accurate pronoun reference and modifier-placing—matters which we could express more logically our-

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selves, but which are clear enough so far as the children can honestly see.¹ The worst result that could possibly be gained from such study is the overeasy one of making a class finical and nagging in tearing apart each other's sentences, petty in pursuit of trivialities, lost to the ideal of honest appraisal of the interest in the projects that their classmates present. If we are to avoid this, we must, I believe, realize fully that the suggestions about sentence building which we study are not precepts to be applied arbitrarily to any situation whatever, but matters of judging better and worse effect — even though sometimes much better or very much worse. The children's work must be valued always by their actual success in attaining their aim in the social class, and this must be always an audience of keen but fair and true coöperators who appreciate the best workmanship in expression. We must encourage prompt condemnation of guerrilla pettifogging wherever we discover signs of it. Finally, ideas to express and real freedom and naturalness and readiness in expressing them are, we have been constantly insisting, far more important in grades and high school than any

¹ Cf. Palmer's translation of the *Odyssey*. Introduction, p. xxiv.

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sentence-technique, however finished. Only when the necessary principles are applied in revising none but cases which the class can realize as distinctly lacking in clearness and vigor, then can we be sure that the exercise may really help in increasing power of thought and expression, and not in futile harrying. The teacher's judgment is nowhere more important, and it seems quite evident that it must, if it is to be most valuable, be based in thorough realization of the class needs and capabilities.

As to the value of such long and determined but carefully delimited campaigns as we have been considering for the mastery of sentence principles: We have noted that true gains are probably to be achieved only by study instituted because the children have come or have been brought to realize that their sentences lack effect and that they have need of a given structural principle. Thus begun, such study needs to be untiringly carried out, by first developing clear and simple principles and then applying them in numberless cases of construction and revision — mostly of the children's own work — to practical conquest of means of effect. Mastery of a few basic ideas in this fashion may mean a quite notable contribution to the child's

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conquest of his own mind. I do not mean that we can secure for children such adult mastery of these problems as is represented in the ability of the trained and gifted writer to see keenly and instantly what ideas in his mind belong in one sentence, what ones should gain chief effect by being given principal rank, and by what types of relation and structure he can best express the complex. The orator Fox, we are told in Professor Palmer's essay,¹ could "throw himself headlong into the midst of a sentence, trusting to God Almighty to get him out." But most of us who try it from day to day know from our failures that this is an affair of many more years' painstaking and thoughtful experience than can be even realized by the high-school pupil.² The point for him is simply that through continued heedful notice of excellent sentences and through other pupils' criticism of his failures in effect, he may gain some conscious ability to think the relations of ideas and the best ways of expressing these before writing or speaking. That this shall not become an affair of hampering and overprecise deliberation, but a gradual and

¹ *Self-Cultivation in English*, p. 16.

² "Will you tell me, 'Oh, — any one can write prose passably well'? Can he, indeed? — can *you*, sir?" — Quiller-Couch, *On the Art of Writing*, p. 30.

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healthy growth in clearness and robustness and readiness of expression, must rest almost entirely with the common sense of the individual teacher in governing and directing the class criticism and keeping it sound and good-spirited.

ACHIEVEMENT OF ACCURACY IN FITTING WORDS TO IDEAS

For gaining accuracy in word choices—finding those that fit the precise idea exactly—much the same process of growth is necessary. We of course want children's vocabularies to grow with their widening experience, so that, as they look sharply into that experience and discriminate among their new ideas more exactly, they may be more ready with terms for expressing themselves truly and effectively about it. But here it seems even more necessary to insist that pointing out differences between words must be perfectly meaningless except where the child realizes his inaccuracy as deterrent in some fashion—either to his own clear thinking or, more usually, to his making himself clear to his audience. Further, such processes as correction of a child's words and prescription of new ones must be altogether futile unless the child has some specific experience as

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a basis for seeing the difference and thus can appreciate how one word is actually more useful and exact than the other. That is, as in the case of sentences, growing keenness of thought must precede the demand for a new expression. To be sure, a direct route to making thought keener is apparently helping achieve understanding of distinctions in meaning among words. But it is likely that we have oftenest worked quite too hard on that end of the problem, without making sure that the discriminations we have urged were both quite comprehensible and truly useful to our pupils. We have too long continued cheerfully to assume that enforcing distinctions between terms like *verse* and *stanza* — apparently a mere technical distinction without authority in present good usage, in spite of the determined stand of many a purist — is a gain in vocabulary or mental keenness or both.

Many lessons suggested and taught seem to add only fog and confusion. Where lists of descriptive or appreciative words are given a child, it would seem to require a rather robust idea of what he wants to say, a real experience to express — something that is not at hand in too many cases of this sort — and it would also appear to demand sincere guidance and great

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judgment on the teacher's part to keep a pupil's composition from becoming a sickly mess of verbiage. To illustrate a common sort of word-study by an actual example: A primary teacher, coming upon the word *dwell* in the children's reading lesson, remarked, "Here's a nice word for you to use, children." And the children, some of them, used it. This might, I admit, have been worse; the teacher might have hit upon *abide*, which is rather less possible to find real use for; or she might have prescribed and hammered-in the word with the idea of forcibly feeding gaunt young vocabularies; these things also have been known to occur. But was n't her performance at best a wasteful misdirection of the children's energies? Does the word *dwell* represent a possibly valid distinction, or add anything, except a pretty archaic flavor, to children's expression? And again, — a consideration that appears vastly more important, — is n't it often the scorn with which healthy-minded children regard this sort of thing that makes most of them relapse into content with fourth-grade vocabularies, even for writing university freshman themes? This last point seems to me particularly well worth looking into.

Our attempts to aid children's development in

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these regions should, of course, have their beginning in the careful study of children's own attempts to express their real experience and of the class criticism of that expression. On this basis we will best give major attention to encouraging the child in new and absorbing interests in exploration and adventure and in careful attempts to give the group of his friends the clearest possible view of his new ideas. Thus we first of all motivate the study of new words by the child's own discovery that he needs better and sharper tools for fashioning clearly and presenting ideas inchoate in his mind.

He will then best attain his desired ends by observing carefully the best expression of like ideas which he can discover. We may need simply to direct him where to find matter whose ideas and statement are within his comprehension and related to his needs. But it seems essential also to awaken in him a constantly keener interest in new words that appear in all his reading and in the speech of those about him. We can better say preserve and widen this interest; for it is so natural and sharp in little children — is so clearly a means of their growing out of the stage where all animals are bow-wows to the surprisingly large vocabulary of average first- and second-graders — that it must surely

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be very bad handling which could dull it completely. Yet, somehow, it does apparently disappear before most children enter high school. If a child is but kept always eager to get full meaning out of useful words he comes upon — to visualize them, and find the black shape of their letters stuffed with new ideas which he is free to explore, and with a history and interesting relationships — I think we need only to encourage and direct, never to compel or even urge most youngsters to reach a really tremendous extension of experiences and powers of accurate expression year by year. The teacher will also do well, provided he has taste and discrimination, to employ in his own speaking the widest possible variety of usable and right words, keeping always within the range of possible needs of his pupils. He may do this with avowed intention, but he must take pains to make clear the precise use of new words he introduces.

We may, then, help the child to get a real personal experience out of new words — to realize them and relate them into his life. If a teacher asks often, "What does this word make you see? Does it remind you of anything you have seen yourself?" and the like, though he may apparently move tangent to the logical de-

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velopment of story or lesson, he can, I believe, succeed in bringing back to it more of understanding and appreciation than would otherwise be possible. And there is of course place and need, in both grades and high school, to do this sort of thing in special word-study periods, using as material particularly well-worded sentences — best of all from the work of the class. Deriving the exact meanings of *shy* and *nimble* and *fangs* and their differences from less expressive and specific words which the children have used for lack of better must depend on making definite associations with ideas that the child has from previous experiences. By making such associations very clear and real, we may have good hope that he will then use the words naturally in useful and natural fashion, without any prescription at all. Indeed, as a child grows in this sincere interest in the marvelous things that words can reveal, there may be need rather to hold in his vagaries and enthusiasms with attention to the demands of true effectiveness, whether tested through actual comprehension by his audience or his own and their good taste. But the attempt to use true and specific words deserves always to be stirred and encouraged, even when its results seem poor or grotesque.

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All this, of course, means many pleasant and cheerful uses of the dictionary when the children are ready for this — not a stern and ungracious reference to it for the spelling of words merely. It may mean also happy excursions into the history of common expressions. The delight of natural children in the original meanings of *baffle* and *gingerly*, for instance, should go far to help them in adding such interesting and useful words to their vocabularies. A most fruitful study of word-use consists in having written on the blackboard before the class all the specific equivalents they can suggest for a general word like *walked*: *strode*, *ambled*, *waddled*, and so on almost indefinitely.¹ The children here generally gain a pleasant sense that their word-store for definite expression is far wider than they have supposed and has delightful possibilities. And such intense interest and understanding of the possibilities of words, once gained — or kept — can hardly escape reaction in better command of ideas and clearer realization of new experiences.

Of course there is here again the possibility of carrying study and criticism too far; we need an accurate and understanding touch with our pupils if we wish to stop before this ceases to

¹ Cf. Baldwin, *Writing and Speaking*, pp. 146-48.

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serve a useful purpose and becomes mere jugglery. If it is to remain true and sound and fruitful, *it must always have specific reference to children's real problems of speech and writing.* And provided it has this relation, we need rarely, I think, prescribe or even suggest lists of words usable in meeting a descriptive or other problem. The needs of the situation and the creative and helpful spirit of the class criticism should be sufficient for gaining quite satisfactory results. The ends we most desire here may be stated as (1) a sense, gradually evolving out of the vague inaccuracy of children's minds, of need for exact, *specific* words; and (2) a definitely directed habit of observing new words—or, better still, a sense of the usefulness of known expressions to one's own expressional purposes every day. That this is more valuable to gain than any amount of specific insistence on particular discriminations—that it is indeed their only deeply important fruition, scarcely appears to need argument.

GAINING APTNESS AND ARTISTRY IN WORD CHOICES

But just as words must be perfectly fitted to the meaning a child wants to convey, so they

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must also be fitted to his audience or readers and to the exact purpose he has in hand — an affair of artistry. This is perhaps a more difficult subject even than the other; and I certainly believe that the bad results of pecking and nagging correction are worse in these matters of taste than in any other. We have noticed that in a similar domain, that of taste in color and design, good courses are built on a principle which appears to be equally important to English teachers. The *Horace Mann School Course in Art*,¹ in discussing how to better the child's "elemental æsthetic preferences," explains the matter in this way: "Decorations that have good coloring are shown to him, and he compares his designs with these and criticizes his own. He is also shown the effect of combining tones of the same color, and of a touch of black or dark brown in certain combinations. In this way he gradually grows away from the use and from joy in the use of crude colors. By the end of the first year many children show a considerable degree of feeling and taste in their selections and combinations."² In composition, on the other hand, we have probably had too much prescrip-

¹ Teachers College Elementary School Course, 1908, Grade I, p. 55. ² Cf. Sargent's *Fine and Industrial Arts*, pp. 27 ff.

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tion of opinion by teacher and text. But reconstruction of the child's taste seems not to accomplish itself in that way. I realize, of course, that many children's preferences in words seem quite too raw and crude for a sensitive teacher to endure tamely; but so also is the boy's corresponding taste in neckties and the girl's in scents. To elevate these is a matter of deeper, more difficult requirements than are met by determined and horrified proscription of slang. If we must have proscription, we have noted that it may be most effectively secured through the deliberate class judgment and not through the insistence of the teacher alone. Certain specific crudities of expression may doubtless be thus determined against by the class judgment and ranked with such unacceptable forms as "you was." But after all, the success of an attempt to elevate taste must probably depend rather upon tactful suggestion and upon help through the influence of excellent speech and writing.

We may, then, encourage the child and his coöperators to look consciously for the most apt and vigorous and fine expression of their ideas. What we should try thus to establish is a sense of better personal satisfactions as well as stronger effects to be had from careful attention to the

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words that say a thing most satisfyingly, whether in recitations or in writing verse. But it is probably of no more effect to inveigh against surface manifestations of raw taste or heedlessness of art, whether cheapness or slovenliness in word choices, than it would be to forcibly fasten on the boy a black tie instead of the green and purple one he prefers, and require him to wear it in the hope that he would come to like it. It seems that we shall be far more likely to succeed if we let him take his choice among haberdashery with a generous amount of bright but really good color and thus come naturally toward better judgments of his own in the matter.

Forces working toward artistic expression

There seems no reason to question that the prime force in these attempts to increase children's taste should be the hearing and reading and study of beautiful expression, just as their level of appreciating exquisite line and color may be raised in part by the study of beautiful pictures or designs. There is of course — what is always spoken of in this connection but too rarely used — the influence of such fine and rhythmic English as the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer and the most simple and per-

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fect poetry read day by day. And, of course, — probably more directly influencing them, — there should be the example of the teacher's good, vigorous speech — certainly not cheapened by what is vulgar in slang or in affectation, nor priggishly precise and pseudo-literary — and of the best artistry in the work of other children. Yet we cannot be sure of gaining the most effect unless we undertake definite study of good literature, by which we may perhaps be permitted to mean all fine and effective expression, by the children as well as by the masters. We need to examine numberless words and comparisons such as the child himself may find useful for making his expression vivid and artistic. Attention to bringing out all the picture in phrases like Lanier's "the humped and fishy sea" and "the huge and huddling sea" often repays us most richly. *Old Ironsides*, again, contains many examples of effective phrasing. If we ask the children what they see when they read such lines as "the meteor of the ocean air" and "the eagle of the sea," and what the poet meant to suggest by the comparisons, we find them discovering all sorts of interesting things — many of these, perhaps, quite absent from the writer's mind, but almost all valid and in-

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teresting. If they really get the ideas suggested by such words — see the pictures and hear the sounds that the poem suggests of sea-battle in storm — they may gain not alone a thorough and hearty appreciation of the verses and a vivid experience, but a new idea of the possibilities of quite simple words and comparisons which cannot but affect their raw ways of expression.¹

And then we need to encourage them, both by commendations and by suggestions as to bettering their own attempts at expression, to make use of what they find pleasing — this certainly not a process of prescription and insistence, but of gradually evolving standards chosen and followed both by the group and by each child for himself. In directing this growth, the teacher has most need to see to it determinedly that he does not foist his mere predilections upon the children as ideals.

Toward adapting expression to audience and purpose

A final point in this study of taste in words is considering how to adapt expression to its

¹ Hayward's *The Lesson in Appreciation* is excellent on this point. The subject of poetic expression is beautifully presented in Max Eastman's *The Enjoyment of Poetry*.

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purpose. When a child studies Irving happily, he can hardly escape the suggestion of using certain archaic or heavily bookish expressions, in retelling the story or in writing one of his own. His classmates may agree that expressions like *cognomen* and *wight* and *inveterate propensity* give the right flavor to a story of antique spirit and humor, and are pleasant too to try in storytelling. Many delightful experiments may thus be made throughout the grades — in the proper speech for giants and enchanted animals and Revolutionary heroes. But the children may also note specifically that wording suitable to cases like these by no means fits simple everyday expression. Thus they may come to make still more important studies in adapting what they have to say to its most effective expression for a particular audience. They may discover that what one uses for letters to other children is n't altogether the thing for a formal occasion, and that an invitation to the superintendent or one's aunt for a special school celebration will be worded differently from the way they ask a neighbor over to play. The experiments already suggested ¹ in imagining the class to be various dignified bodies and in actually address-

¹ Chap. I, p. 31.

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ing other groups of people, whether in speech or in writing, may all be excellent; and as the children become interested in the attempts to judge a piece of work as it would actually be received in a given situation, they may grow to understand that story or explanation or plea must fit its purpose not alone in clearness but in aptness of expression. They should discover that although successful expression by no means comes flatly down to its hearers' level in vulgarity or incorrectness, for instance, yet it must be suited to their appreciation. Lincoln's legendary resolve that his expression should always be understandable by such an unlettered boy as he was did not mean, as any one can find by reading his unsurpassed prose, that he confined himself to words of two syllables or to rough and elemental ideas; but his speech and writing were both transparently understandable, and vigorously, richly beautiful. The schoolmaster Roger Ascham states what seems a most appropriate ideal for the teacher: "He that wyll wryte well in any tongue must followe thys council of Aristotle, to speake as the comon people do, to think as wise men do." ¹

¹ From his *Toxophilus*, quoted in Krapp's *Modern English*, p. 245.

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There seems to be much in this for English teachers to chew upon. We are rather too apt to neglect the careful cultivation of homely expressions—such, for instance, as Professor Baldwin lists in his *Writing and Speaking*¹—the expressions that give life to language without transgressing in the way of vulgarity and crudity. Such informal and live wording, above the common level of the street and the homes of most children, but never shot over their heads to suit anybody's "toploftical" ideals, should, I believe, be the practical and everyday standard of the elementary or high-school teacher, both in his own expression and in that which he encourages from his pupils. It is this sort of power that, not alone the boy or girl who goes to work after the sixth or eighth school year, but rather that every one, whatever his intellectuality or culture, needs every day in speech or letters or other informal expression. Attaining this should be the first aim of the teaching of composition. Good colloquialism, as defined by the dictionaries and illustrated in numberless examples of ex-

¹ Pages 43-47; 144-46; cf. the same writer's "The Secret of John Bunyan," in *Essays out of Hours* (p. 75), and Quiller-Couch *On the Art of Writing*: chap. v ("On Jargon") and pp. 285-89 ("On Neologisms").

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cellent and informal use, is precisely the level of expression which I am here suggesting — removed on the one hand from the vulgar and dialectal and incorrect, and filled on the other with a life and suitableness and homely clarity that formal and literary speech or writing has in only exceptional cases. Formality we may well work toward, whenever need for it appears, by developing appropriate situations. But these may not appear most naturally, perhaps, till the period of bombast and declamation which average children reach about the middle of the high-school period. For everyday English speech and writing, the appropriate ideal seems to be the best usage of the best users of the language in their informal and unstudied expression.¹

We must certainly hold reasonable standards of correctness and clearness and good taste if we would help children to widely effective expression; but we must never limit our standards by narrow, prejudiced restrictions if we do not want them to encircle and choke all expressive impulse through the confusion and horror of constant proscription. As a practical measure it may be worth suggesting that a teacher will do well to consult at least the ob-

¹ Cf. p. 131.

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servations of present best usage in the reputable dictionaries, and his own careful observation as well, rather than accept merely the judgment of his personal taste or any other criterion not widely based. If from children's crudity and heedlessness we may help them by guiding their slowly maturing appreciations, through discomforting stages of garish and blatant wording, of wild-growing euphuism, of exultation in all that is most trite and outworn, to achievement at last of some understanding of the beauty in simple and concrete and homely expression, we shall probably have led them far in the way of highest attainable artistry. That this growth must be inspired always by the best examples, really understood and appreciated, is doubtless evident enough.

MAKING USE OF GOOD EXAMPLES OF EXPRESSION

(1) *Reproduction and imitation*

For the child's actual use of what he discovers as possibly valuable in the literature which the class carefully study, there are two distinct methods. The first is consciously re-using the ideas or the technique of the work. In various

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places we have noted the relation of story-reproduction and the presentation of dramas written by some one else, to grasp of organization, fixation of correct form conventions, and development of effective wording and sentence-structure. Recitation of matter well organized and stated in a text, or committing to memory — where the children express what they really understand — may have related values. And finally, deliberate, prescribed imitation of models lies apparently in the same category. For imitation problems present not alone the expressional project — where the method permits and recognizes a true project — *but also the specific method for its solution.*

All these ways of reproducing other people's technique or ideas, though they have, I believe, by no means the same values as original composition, appear to be of good effect in proportion as the child has a real interest in the thing he is doing and thus makes his performance not stupidly mechanical, but alive. Whether he is putting his own spirit and individuality into what he speaks is not difficult to determine. We may have the testimony of his voice and whole bearing as to whether he is presenting a real experience or words only. Then too, we have

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long, I hope, passed the stage in educational practice where absolute accuracy is wanted in children's work of this sort; except of course in necessary recitations of mere fact, we desire the child's personal touch to what he gives. If his emendation is inferior to the story itself, the children will be prompt enough in telling him so, and comparisons thus instituted and discussed are excellent training.

(2) *Application to original problems of methods discovered*

But different and, I believe, greater values may be had where a child simply comes against the problem of expressing a live and important experience of his own and must find out for himself what use he can make of principles and methods of work that he has discovered in previous study of models. Given such a problem — and without it composition as we are considering it is impossible — I submit that the child had better be left quite free to develop his own aim in attacking it, generally with the stimulus of the class discussion, and solve it as best he can in his own way rather than by any one method noted or required. The wise guidance of the teacher must of course be devoted to sug-

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gestion of real projects that are fully within the powers of the children to solve, but that they must stretch their minds to compass. If he will see to it that these problems often need for their effective meeting methods which the children are just then discovering in story or text, he can without any prescription succeed in bringing their newly gained knowledge to bear on constantly new and increasing difficulties.

And however much we may be inclined to chafe sometimes at bungling and roundabout means of handling what seems to us a perfectly obvious difficulty, I believe we have need to hold ourselves pretty sternly in hand and allow the class, if they can, to propose various modes of attack, condemn those that fail under fire, and select the most practicable. In some cases, like the explanation of a game, they may discover that only one arrangement can be made fully clear; in others, where many approaches are possible, the class may decide that the ways are best which show a clearly original handling, fusing the results of previous study and experience and producing an individual way of organization, or finely specific or poetic wording. A good example of an experience so vividly

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realized as to result in new and apt expression is given in Dr. Dewey's *The School and Society*, where one child wrote that the water *pulls* and another that it *tore* the calcium out of the rock.¹ Normal children with ideas and experiences that they really want to talk or write about rarely need more than the stimulus of the class discussion to give them various methods of work from which to select; and they can generally see the point of group criticism when they fail in a cumbersome or inept method. Indeed, there are very real values once in a while in having the children set to work on a live project unaided and uninspired even by the class suggestions, to discover what level of attainment each one has reached through the previous meeting of problems — a sort of composition test. Only in the cases of the hopelessly dull and sodden, I believe — in work, at any rate, beyond the primary grades — should any prescription of specific method be needed save perhaps as a quite temporary crutch.

Thus the study of literature, rightly approached, not alone suggests new and interesting experiences and projects for expression, but many good ways of meeting problems that the

¹ Page 68 (1st ed.).

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child's interest and activities from day to day lead him to attempt. This study of models to find out the ideas and methods back of their construction should bring the children to greater consciousness and heed of the methods of effective expression and a gradually evolving freedom and artistry. It is hardly too much to say that every normal child has potentialities of some artistic development. And provided he is not hemmed in too far by prescription, but only checked and guided by the evolving demands of his social group for greater effectiveness — clearness and vigor and beauty of expression — there is the greatest probability that he will achieve power of meeting the facts of his experience with keen attention, organizing them with respect to their relations and significance, and expressing with some effect the ideas that he has need and motive to discuss.

THE IDEAL OF THE FINISHED PRODUCT

It seems worth while to canvass briefly the subject of the standards by which we shall judge children's attempts at expression, for there is the special danger in our study of excellent models that we shall come to hold for children's work the standard of adult and finished products.

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But if we appraise the work of immature minds in the light of what we ourselves are inclined to call excellent — by adult judgments upon accurate wording and sentence relations, mature organizations according to relative values, and the like — the result is pretty certain to be fatal. In the matters of organizing ideas and building sentences, letting our criticisms go ahead of the child's understanding only means his "angry confusion" and distraction of attention from essential matters that he is capable of mastering. In criticism of wording, there may ensue not only these results, but either the child's unnatural overshooting into a vulgarity of pendent stereotyped expression apparently to fit his teacher's demand for formal literary usage, or, far more frequently, a reaction into contempt for all fineness of expression and content with a barbaric and meager and stupid English worse, if possible, than his first state. On this point every teacher should find most valuable several references to the Ideal — or Golden Calf — of the Finished Product in Dr. Miller's *Psychology of Thinking*.¹ "The ideal of the finished product is absolutely vicious," he insists, "except as it functions to determine the remote goal."²

¹ Pages 109-14, 121-22, etc.

² Ibid., page 112.

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The most valid conclusions from this consideration of developing standards of expression, then, appear to be somewhat as follows: —

First, since both forms and standards of effectiveness in expression rise from social need, the first step in improving work should probably be a child's realization that he needs better expression, and that a given form or mode of organization may prove valid and effective.

Second, the essential form-conventions, since they must simply be fixed ineradicably in habit, need to be worked toward one at a time till they become practically unconscious reactions, and this without confusing correction of points not yet mastered.

Third, principles of sentence-structure and of word-choice for clearness and artistry, like those of organization or prevision, must also be undertaken one at a time; but the best mode of attack in this case is different: The child must work to discover, in repeated attacks on his own real problems, what mode of organization or sentence building or what word will gain his effect, try any method he can discover or devise, and thus come to formulate principles of structure or discriminations in the meaning or aptness of words and phrases.

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Fourth, the child's study of good literature and the frank criticism of his own work by the whole class are the guiding forces in this advancement.

Fifth, whatever judgments the teacher attempts to make of the clearness or artistry of a child's expression must be based, not on a comparison with adult standards of excellence, but on a full understanding of what children of a given mental age can do and of what the class will naturally approve and condemn, and always in the fullest possible specific knowledge of the powers and difficulties of the individual child.

To sum up: principles and forms must be approached only as their need is clearly established; as undivided attention can be given each one till it is fully established; and in a method suited to gaining the best effect, whether this is drill on forms or thoughtful exercise on relations and discriminations. Attack that is not prepared, concentrated, and determined has little chance for success. Particularly, the everlasting attempt to criticize work and to establish discriminations and principles according to ideals too fine or remote for the comprehension of the pupil must be always not alone futile, but positively harmful.

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It has been the aim of this study to present a development of expressional power in children through the coöperation of a truly social class. For this, we have seen that composition subjects may best arise naturally from the child's vital interests, as projects that appeal to him; and that composition probably develops best through group discussion, careful organization of ideas, coöperative criticism, and organized study, based always in needs realized by the pupils, for discovery and use of good methods of work. It may safely be assumed, I believe, that the subject so developed may produce results not only of power of expression in individual children, but of ability to take interest in common projects and to coöperate in friendly fashion for their achievement. It is only as we see the study in these largest relations, and not as an affair merely of chastening and expanding the verbal powers of the boy or girl, that it becomes clear how different a subject it is coming to be from the sodden, idealess drudgery of themes swoopingly red-inked and at the earliest possible moment thrown into the waste-basket.

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For socializing the children's eager but non-social joy in expression, we shall attempt using two other natural child-activities —

1. The child's direct experience suggests expres-
sional projects 2
2. His interest in accounts of other experiences
both
 - a. leads to further expressional projects, and,
 - b. more important, may be developed into co-
operative work and creative criticism by the
group 2

I. THE SOURCES OF COMPOSITION PRO- JECTS IN CHILD-ACTIVITIES

- A. Natural child-activities suggest many subjects
for expression —
 1. These must be vital and concrete — whether
direct or at second-hand — and full of activity
and personal appeal 2
 2. Four typical interests — in stories, play, hand-
work, and observation — suggest various lines
of composition work 6
 3. Experience got at second-hand is of value only
when thoroughly digested 8
- B. The vital projects thus originated are of three
types, based on (1) the story-teller motive, (2)

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the teacher motive, and (3) the "community-worker" motive	15
1. The story-teller motive is to celebrate one's self and to entertain others with real or fanciful adventures	16
2. The teacher motive is to explain games and processes, difficulties in studies, and the like	22
3. The community-worker motive is to coöperate in meeting real social needs	25
4. In projects like (2) and (3), we may help children to see that valid opinions are based primarily on observable data	28
5. Many situations suggesting a wider audience introduce the motives to written work	31
a. to preserve what is especially well done	33
b. to publish beyond the class group	33
II. THE SOCIAL GROUP AS AN AGENT IN EXPRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT	
A. We need first to discriminate two stages in expressive development: (1) unstudied, happy talk, and (2) prepared composition	37
There are three processes for the class group in developing prevised compositions —	
B. Group discussion may select interesting projects and canvass methods for carrying them through	44
As a result, each child should proceed to careful planning and deliberate expression, doing in his own way his share of the group project	45

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C. The class criticism of each child's work should commend honest effort and suggest specific betterment	47
1. The spirit of the class evaluation must be a creative interest in making each one's work the best possible; its aim is to develop principles of criticism	49
a. We need to see that the prepared themes are allowed to be free and spontaneous and childlike, just as in conversation	50
b. We may seek first suggestions as to the ideas and their organization	51
2. Criticism of manner of presentation should commend improvement, make specific suggestions, avoid heckling, and resolutely demand minimum essentials	52
D. The criticism of written work has special problems	55
1. As too severe demands are speedily fatal, we should hold no higher standards than for prepared oral work	56
2. Plenty of time and training for proof-reading for a few specific points is essential	56
3. The class pride must also check up the writers, for form essentials especially	57
a. The ideal is one hundred per cent attainment of a few possible points	58
b. We may make the class judgment graphic by publishing composite grades, awards, etc.	59
4. For corrections and correction-symbols, we	

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may perhaps substitute (1) class and black-board work, (2) pupil correction of a few specific points, and (3) conferences 60

The third process of organized composition work, systematic study of prevision and development of expressional standards, is the theme of Chapters III and IV.

III. THE ORGANIZATION OR PREVISION OF IDEAS

- A. Limitation and grouping of subject-matter is the first step in prevision
1. Class criticism may help the child to select and develop only one thing 68
He next discovers need for grouping the ideas he selects 71
 2. In the first type of grouping, the plan may be shown in a sentence listing "what happened next" through the story 72
 3. The second type consists of throwing larger wholes into a few convenient groups . . . 76
 - a. A plan sentence, as in (2), naming the groups, and a like sentence for the details in each, makes a simple, practicable outline . 78
 - b. Children must not for a long time try handling the whole of such large subjects, but single phases only 82
 4. The third organization-type is a grouping about an interpretive sentence — the writer's conclusion 86

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- B. Arrangement and connection of units of subject-matter** — a parallel process — seems dependent on the success of limitation and grouping; four large types of arrangement are noted 90
1. Time order, the all but universal arrangement, is varied first by the demands of the audience for —
 - a.* the project stated first in explanations . . 92
 - b.* vividness and interest in beginning stories 93
 2. For firmness and force in various types of themes, the emphasis principle suggests —
 - a.* striking details put first 94
 - b.* unexpected or significant ones reserved for the last 95
 3. For clearness in explanations it is essential to put basic matters first —
 - a.* in games and other processes, the apparatus and the principle or purpose 99
 - b.* in all cases, what is known to the reader or hearer or most readily comprehensible . . 100
 4. In describing visual perceptions — in geography, etc. — it is generally necessary —
 - a.* to give first the specific sketch-outline . . 103
 - b.* to fit in concrete details according to their arrangement in space 107
 5. Connectives may be developed for showing relations with unmistakable clearness; we may work for artistry later 109

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IV. THE EVOLUTION AND ATTAINMENT OF EXPRESSIONAL STANDARDS

This problem is here divided into two distinct phases:

- A. The form conventions essential to be established in unconscious habit come within the groups: (1) correct grammar, (2) punctuation, (3) spelling and pronunciation, and (4) further needful courtesies of speech and manuscript form 115
 - 1. It is first essential to determine upon so few essentials of present usage that we can fully master them 117
 - 2. We must next find how many and what forms we can establish one hundred per cent in each school year, and fix these 121
 - 3. In this establishment, two stages are necessary 136
 - a. Realization of the right form and of its value through reproducing such conditions as probably gave rise to the form 137
 - b. Complete fixation of the form through (1) drill with social motivation and (2) use of the form in solving real problems 140
 - (1) This requires careful proof-reading and resolute checking-up by the class . . . 147
 - (2) We need also coöperation from outside the class 148
 - (3) The aim is intelligent self-correction . 150
- B. The development of effectiveness in sentence-building and in word choices requires growing

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keenness and accuracy of thought and fineness of taste	153
1. Unlike the process of form-fixation, realization of need, discovery of broad principles of structure, and conscious work to apply these makes up the procedure here	154
2. Study of sentence-construction may aid in developing children's powers of viewing ideas in relation	156
3. Achieving accuracy in wording means growing appreciation and practice of clear and specific statement	167
4. Development of artistry in word choices needs to be based on appreciation of fineness and fitness of expression	174
5. We may make use of literature studied through (1) reproduction or imitation exercises; and, far more valuable, (2) attempts by the pupils to adapt methods they discover to the meeting of their own problems	184
6. If we attempt to apply the standards of adult literature in criticizing children's work, however, the results are likely to be disastrous .	189

Social composition projects, arising naturally from children's vital interests, discussed by the class as coöperators, carefully organized and solved by each child in his own way, and criticized in a creative spirit by the class, form the basis of this study. Such projects, completed by study of method based always on needs discov-

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ered, should result not only (1) in power of individual expression, but (2) in ability to take interest in common aims and work with others for their achievement.

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